

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of the Initial Cohort of Girls at the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls

By Molly Whitted and Michelle Williams

“...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, 2nd Superintendent of the Massachusetts Reformatory for Women, as cited in Freedman, 1984p.75)

For the last four years, students at the Indiana Women’s Prison have been researching the history of our prison, which is considered to be the first state prison for women and girls in the United States. Thus far, their focus has been on the staff and women incarcerated at the prison during the first decade of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, as it was then known. We have found that the institution and the Indiana State Archives have many of the original documents from the girls reformatory division that had yet to be researched and shared. This paper seeks to reveal 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, the years Sarah Smith served as the superintendent for the facility. In 2013, our colleagues partially digitized the data with the assistance of Amarilis Roman, a student at DePauw University. We have completed digitizing the registries, and in doing so we have discovered a great deal of information about the girls in the institution during that time that begs to be told. Contemporary news articles also give us more in-depth details, especially those regarding a well-publicized investigation that was

launched in 1881 concerning allegations of severe abuse by the staff of the women and girls who were held in the facility at that time.

As secondary sources, we have derived information from books and articles written by traditional scholars, which provide us a background on the reformatory movement in the 19th century particularly regarding juveniles. We have also relied on the work of scholars in our prison who have presented their work at national conferences, such as the American Historical Association, as well as published in scholarly journals. In particular, Michelle Jones analyzed the women's registries, which allows us a point of reference for comparing and contrasting the girls' data, and has also written about the 1881 investigation. Kim Baldwin investigated the economic interests served by the institution, believed to have been gained at the expense of the girls and women who were, in effect, serving as human capital.

Through our research we have found a great deal of information that allows us to draw a verbal photograph of what the average girl looked like coming into and going out of the facility. Through that photograph we will reveal the obvious race and class lines that were prevalent in that post war, political atmosphere. We will give an account of their days, revealing an extremely strict work and education regimen to which they were forced to adhere and vocational training they received 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 consistent for both divisions of the reformatory that were disguised as love and reformation.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Sarah Smith, a native of England and orphan herself, found solace in the Quaker faith which she joined while still a young girl. It was at this time when she began to feel a divine

aspiration for the reformation of 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 that would alter the penal system as a whole.¹

The Coffins were a very prominent and affluent Quaker couple from Richmond, Indiana. They traveled east to prisons in New York, Massachusetts, and Philadelphia in 1858 to witness the methods used in reform by their fellow Quakers.² Among the institutions visited by the Coffins was that of Mount Joy. According to historian Estelle Freedman, “Mount Joy presented a model for reformers. 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.”³

Before they had the notion of opening the reformatory, both Rhoda Coffin and Sarah Smith opened a Home for Friendless Women; Smith’s was located in Indianapolis and Coffin’s in Richmond.⁴ As our colleague Michelle Jones so astutely points out in her article, *Failing the Fallen: Sexual and Gendered Violence*, “The goal of Rhoda Coffin and Sarah Smith was to remake these women...into their own image...and teach them to live by established patriarchal social and religious norms.” This ideology was due to the fact that many “Quaker women were

¹Kimberly Baldwin. *Counterfeit Decency: charity as exploitation in the creation of women's reformatories*. Indianapolis: Unpublished paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Historical Society January 6, 2016. 2

² Ibid., 2

³Estelle B.Freedman. *Their Sister's Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1984). 50

⁴ Baldwin, *Counterfeit*, 3

middle class, and believed they were distinctively equipped to aid working class 'wayward' girls...”⁵.

The antecedent to the foundation of an independent institution for women came when the Coffins visited the Indiana State Prison in Jeffersonville, where women were held jointly with far more numerous men, as was the norm in state prisons throughout the U.S. at the time. There they happened upon a horrific scene of the grossest sexual abuses of the female inmates.⁶ The two reforming women immediately spoke to the assembly on the necessity of building an institution solely for the protection and reformation of fallen women and wayward, orphaned, or incorrigible girls. In 1869 their efforts succeeded, and the Indiana legislature passed the bill.⁷

A Board of Managers for the institution was appointed on July 23rd, 1869⁸. This Board of Managers, consisting entirely of men, was accompanied by a Board of Visitors whose responsibilities were to be inspecting the affairs of management and the condition of inmates.⁹ Finally, on June 12th, 1873, Sarah Smith was appointed superintendent of the institution with an annual income of \$800, along with her husband James, designated as the steward, who would earn \$400 per annum¹⁰. Smith is recorded in *The Sentinel* reminiscing, “During the time of the erection I was in England with my husband, visiting several prisons in that country; I am of the

⁵ Michelle Jones. *Failing the Fallen: Sexual and Gendered Violence*. Indianapolis: Unpublished paper presented at the American Historical Association. January 6, 2016.

⁶ Freedman, *Sisters*, 60

⁷ "Nearing the Close of the Reformatory Investigation" *The Sentinel*. February 9, 1881.

⁸ "Second Annual Report of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: Sentinel Company. January 1, 1874. 13

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8. Rhoda Coffin would later in 1877, become the President of the Board of Managers, doing away with the Board of Visitors altogether. Two other women would be elected on the Board of Managers alongside Coffin, making the reformatory “the only governmental prison in the U.S. or Europe under the entire management of women.” AR 2, 1874, p.5

¹⁰ Second AR, 7

impression that I was called by the voice of the Most High to spend my life in the reformation of fallen women”¹¹.

The reformatory officially opened on the 9th of September, 1873, and on September 12th two girls were brought from the jail “as they could be more profitably employed clearing the rubbish from the new building.” Twenty-one additional girls, along with the female inmates transferred from Jeffersonville, were soon after committed that first year.¹²

The building itself was fashioned in the Utilitarian style, designed by architect Isaac Hodgson. To be as economical as possible to the state, the penal department and the reformatory department were housed under one roof, with the east wing for women and the west wing for girls.¹³ Smith was not pleased. “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.”¹⁴ Freedmen points out, “Indiana ignored the family style designs, punishment cells, sometimes in the basement revealed the expectation of prisoner past moral suasion.”¹⁵ Further evidence of the premeditated intention to favor punishment as a form of reformation can be found in the third annual report for the year

¹¹ “Nearing the Close of Investigation.” *Sentinel*. February 1881

¹² Second AR, 15

¹³ “First Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls.” IN, January 18, 1871. 12

¹⁴ “The Reformatory: Mrs. Sarah Jane Smith, the Superintendent, Presents Her Case to the Committee. And details the Methods of Management and Punishment, and the Results of her Reform Work.” *The Indianapolis Journal*. February 5, 1881.

¹⁵ Freedman, *Sisters*, 70. The family style referred to is the European cottage plan for juvenile institutions in the late 1850s that encouraged a family or home model to cure delinquency.

ending 1874. In April of that year, appropriations were made for the construction of a dungeon.¹⁶

The impractical configuration of the building to be used to house both women and girls began to become most evident in 1878-1879 as revealed in the annual reports for those years. Despite a system they had in place that allowed certain girls to leave the reformatory on a conditional release program called "ticket-of-leave," 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."¹⁷ They initially asked for the appropriations to simply add on to the reformatory side. No such monies were given for that venture, but in 1879 a separate wash room was built to abate the girls from coming into contact with the women. This was deemed necessary by Coffin and Smith to keep the impressionable girls, some of whom were merely abandoned orphans and not criminals, from being negatively influenced by the older convicts.¹⁸ In fact, in 1881, the chairman of the reformatory investigation committee was of the opinion that:

... placing 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 so they won't be contaminated by the criminals.¹⁹

¹⁶ "Third Annual Report of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: Sentinel Company, 1875, December 31, 1874. 7

¹⁷ "Seventh Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Journal Company, State Printers. October 31, 1878. 7

¹⁸ "Eighth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: Douglas & Carlon, Printers and Binders. October 31, 1879. 8

¹⁹ "The Female Reformatory: Mr. Edwins, chairman of the Reformatory investigation committee, presented the following report" *The Indianapolis Journal*. February 25, 1881.

In the thirteenth annual report, published 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.²⁰ This removal did not take place until 1907.

COUNTIES AND COSTS

With the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls open for business, the call went out to all the counties across the state entreating them to send their girls, be they criminal or simply friendless. In the second annual report, with only twenty-one girls housed in the reform side, the Board of Managers expressed their concern over high expenses to the institution due to a lack of inmates. The report states:

...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.

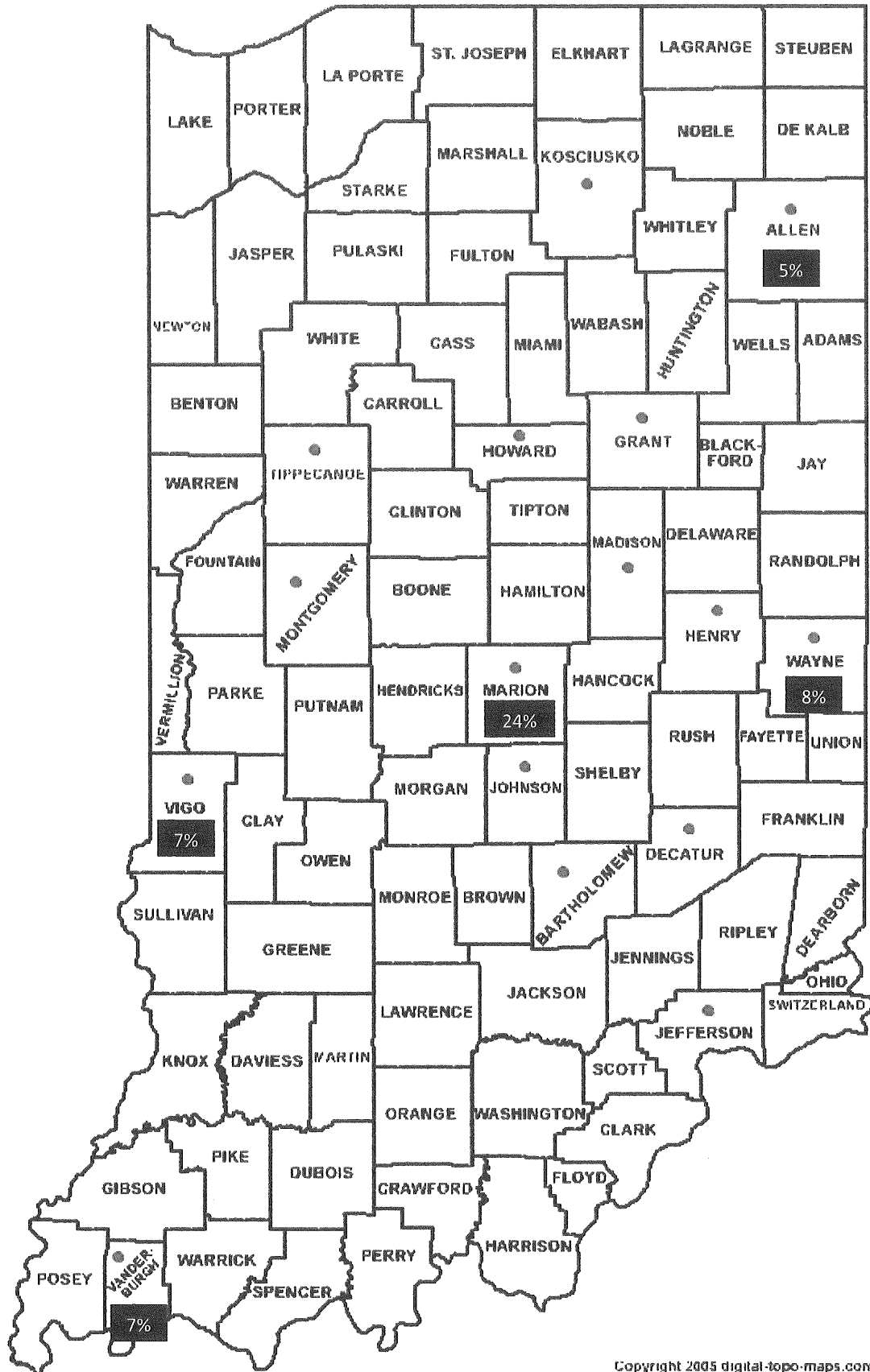
They go on to explain:

It is believed that the people...do not generally understand that a girl need not be an offender against the penal laws...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....²¹

According to the annual reports in conjunction with the official registry, sixty-four 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 counties followed as top contributing counties with 36, 35, and 34 girls respectively. Map 1 illustrates the seventeen highest counties of commitments. The red dots identify the seventeen counties where

²⁰ "Thirteenth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: WM. B. Burford, Contractor for State Printing and Binding. October 31, 1884. 10

²¹ Second AR, p. 27



the majority (81%) of the girls originated, with the top five counties showing their respective percentages. It is important to note that the girls came from nearly every county in the state.

An average cost to feed, clothe, and house these girls was calculated each year by the institution's steward and reported to the state. This amount fluctuated between \$136 and \$200 from 1873 to 1884. The home 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, while the state paid the other half.²² The average yearly cost per county was \$232.92. Marion County sent four times more girls than any other county; they owed the state the lofty sum of \$24,525.94 for those 11 years. Table 1 (*Counties/Costs*) gives an itemized account of the cost per girl per year as designated by the Institution, the yearly amount owed the state by each county, as well as their totals for the entire eleven year period researched, and the total amount of girls they had sent to the Institution. A grand total from all the counties combined equaled \$101,087.29.

Smith was made aware that she was losing out on potential money from the counties due to the fact that a law was in place that limited the age of admittance to the reformatory to 15²³. She began receiving letters asking what was to be done with all the girls over the age of 15 that were unable to be committed²⁴. The Board of Visitors suggested to the legislature that the law be amended, as well as the one requiring the discharge age at 18. They proposed instead that the law allow admittance of girls up to 18 and make discharge age 21²⁵.

Smith, showing a continued concern for the loss of profit, made another suggestion, "that the age of ten is quite too young, unless guilty of a crime. A necessity is felt...for some better

²² Third AR, 12

²³ Second AR, 16

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 28

TABLE 1. COUNTIES COST

YEARS 1873-1884	Sept. 1873 -	Dec. 1874 -	Dec. 1875 -	Dec. 1876 -	Dec. 1877 -	Dec. 1878 -	Dec. 1879 -	Dec. 1880 -	Nov. 1881 -	Nov. 1882 -	Nov. 1883 -	Nov. 1883 -	TOTAL # OF GIRLS 1873-1884
	Nov. 1874	Nov. 1875	Nov. 1876	Nov. 1877	Nov. 1878	Nov. 1879	Nov. 1880	Oct. 1881	Oct. 1882	Oct. 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	
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	
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
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	\$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
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	\$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 is responsible for paying the state half of the cost per annum per girl while they are wards of the Reformatory. This table shows the itemized account per year, and total cost at the end of the eleventh year.

means of giving them regular, useful and profitable employment than our present arrangement will admit of"²⁶. While Smith declared that she had opened this reform school to help *all* friendless girls, her actions suggest she only meant the ones she could profitably employ.

THE AVERAGE GIRL

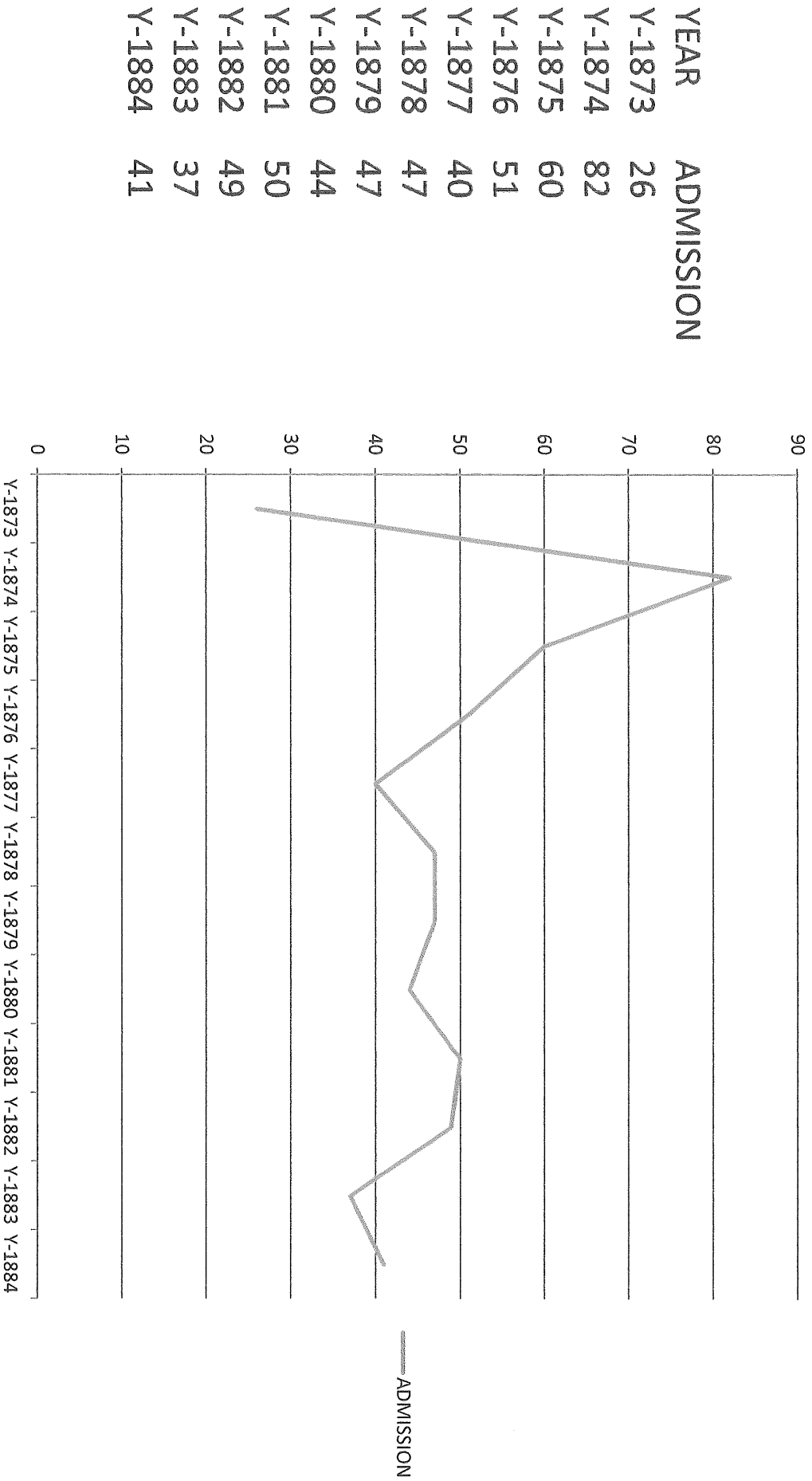
The registries were initially designed to capture a wealth of information about each incoming girl: name, age, parentage, county and crime of conviction, receive and discharge dates, education read, education write, health, capacity, nativity, former surroundings, and remarks. Intake staff faithfully recorded this information for the first three years, September 1873 – December 1877. Over the following four years, the staff was selective in the data that they recorded by only including: name, county and crime of conviction, date received and discharged, nativity, and remarks. Interestingly, at the end of 1881, following the investigation, the records were again recorded efficiently. With the given data from 1873 to 1877 and 1881 to 1884, we intend to illustrate the types of girls held in the institution during the first decade of the facility.

During the first year of the institution, 21 girls were committed to the facility. This number almost quadrupled in the following year with an incredible 82 girls entering the facility, before a slight drop to 60 girls in 1875. Figure 1 illustrates the number of admissions per year for 1873 - 1884. Over the next nine years the numbers stayed relatively consistent, averaging 45 girls a year. Between 1873 and 1880, a law prohibited girls older than 15 from being sent to the reformatory department.²⁷ A few girls over 16 were sent to the reformatory; however, because

²⁶ "Sixth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Journal Company, State Printers, 1878, October 31, 1877.

²⁷ Second AR, 16

Figure 1. Admission of Girls Entering the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, Per Year Survey Period 1873-1884



of the law, their stay at the institution was brief. In one case, a 17-year-old girl, Lisa Moffit, was sent to the Home for Friendless Women,²⁸ where Superintendent Smith had previously been in charge, to be confined. Once the law changed, the institution could begin to receive girls over the age of 15; this then widened the range to include 2 to 17 years of age, with an average age of 14.

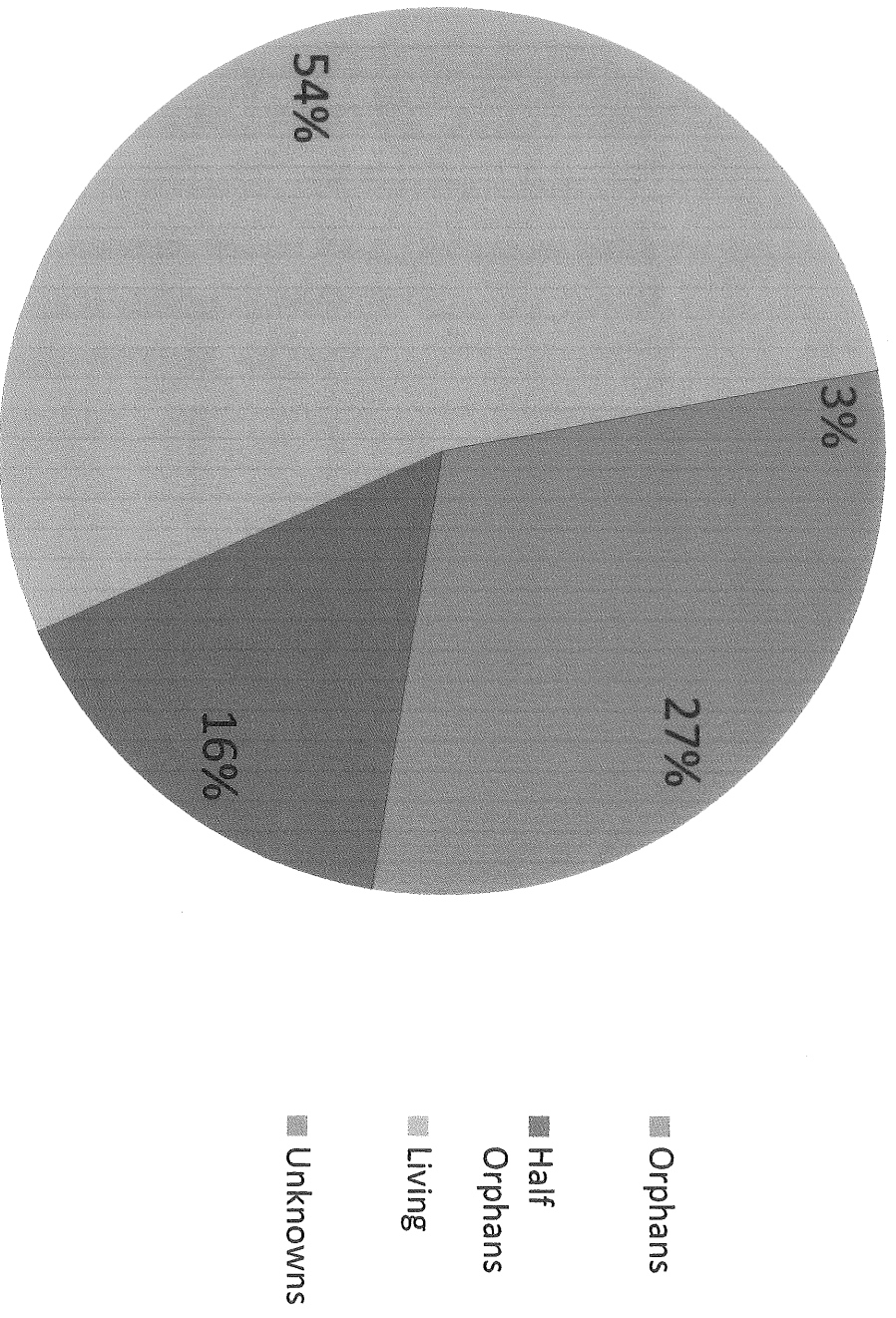
“Parentage” is one of the categories staff reliably recorded for the first 254 girls and then again for the last 133 of the survey period. Figure 2 (*Parentage*) illustrates the percentage of children with and without parents. Looking just at those two subsets, we find 103 were listed as orphans with an additional 59 half orphans. The registry showed 201 girls with one or both living parents. However, in some cases there are subjective comments concerning the character of the parents. Thirty-six of the records list them as “bad” or the equivalent, such as depraved, intemperate, deranged, cruel, etc. Additionally, 17 of the mothers were listed as prostitutes.²⁹ These extra notes on the character of the parent or parents seem to communicate an assumption that the girls were raised with negative influences. Interestingly, in a few cases the parents were listed as Catholic while 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 are subjective and provide an unfavorable narrative of the girls’ home life. Moreover, the results contribute to further justification for the establishment of the reformatory system.

A lack of education is oftentimes used as an argument for reform, yet the results in Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C (ability to read, write and “capacity”) contradict this claim. In the registry, it is revealed that 242 (69%) of the girls had an intellectual level of “average,” and the data shows a 1% difference between the girls with above average and below average intelligence

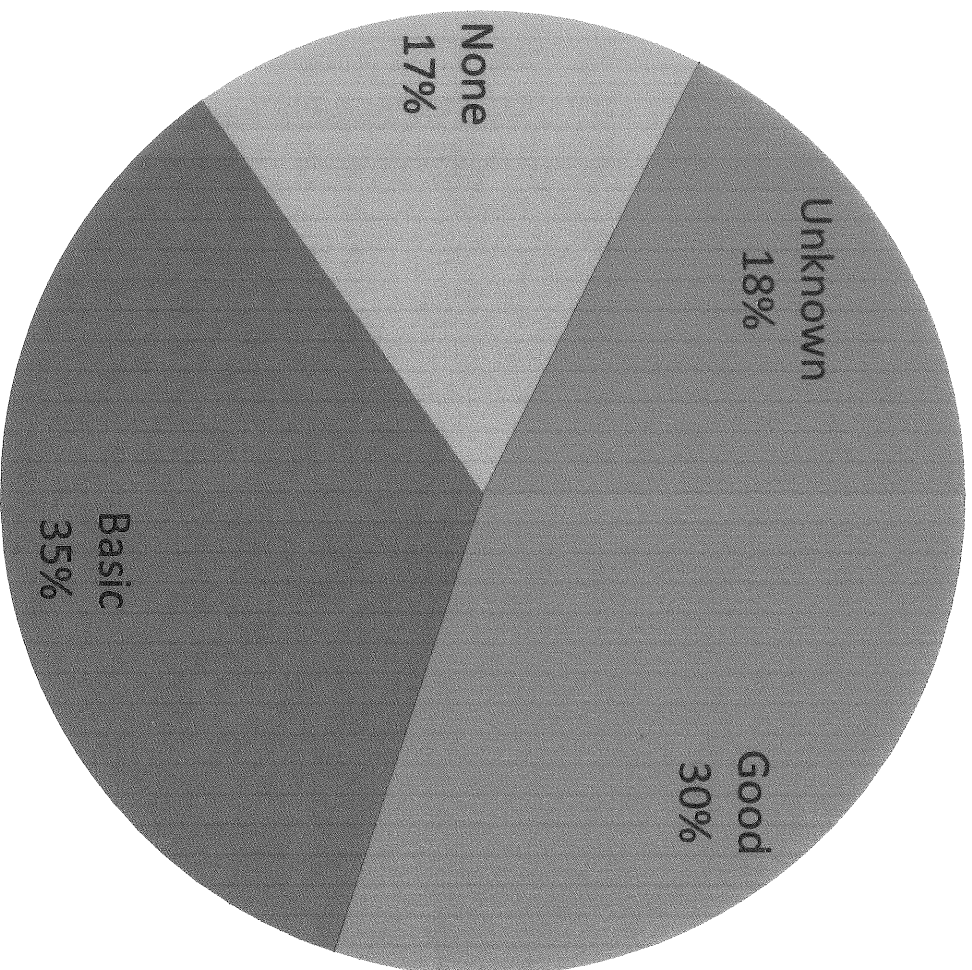
²⁸ “The Official Registry of The Indiana Reformatory Institution For Women and Girls” 1873-1884. (n.d.).

²⁹ Ibid.

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



**Figure 3a. Ability to Write as Assessed on Admission of Girls Entering the
Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls,
1873 – 1877, 1881-1884**



**Figure 3b. Ability to Read as Assessed on Admission of Girls Entering the
Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls,
1873 – 1877, 1881-1884**

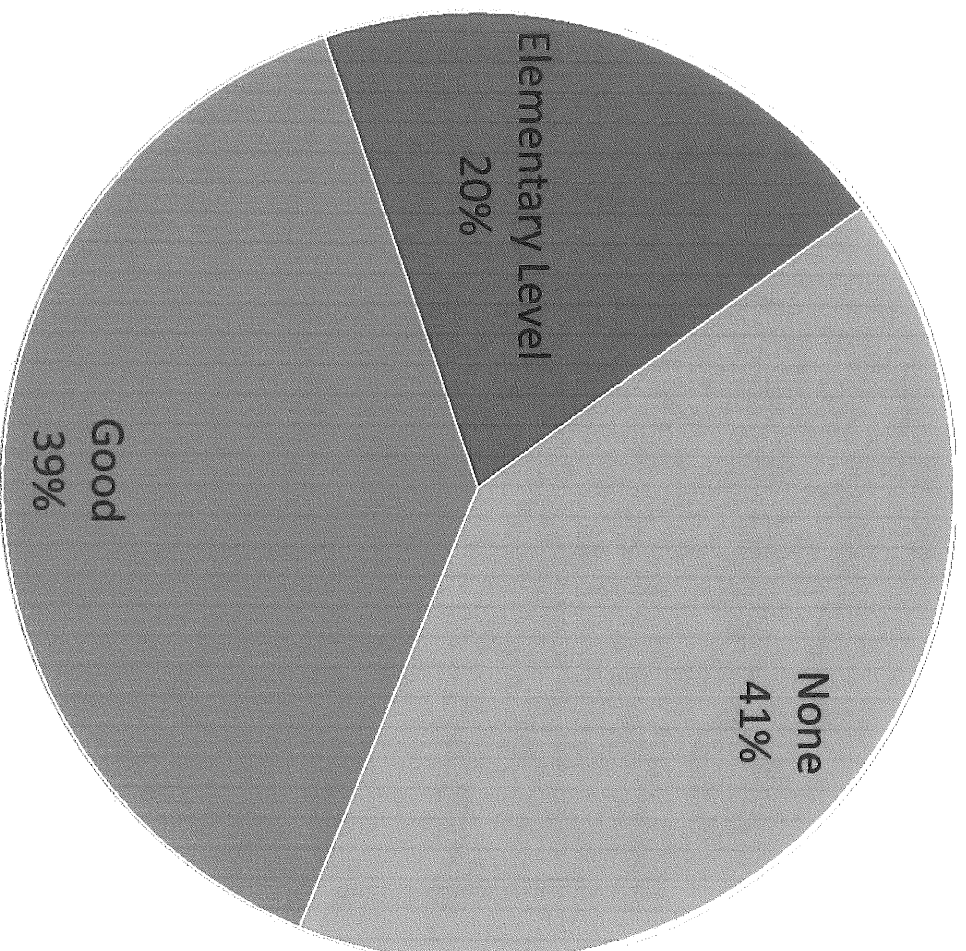
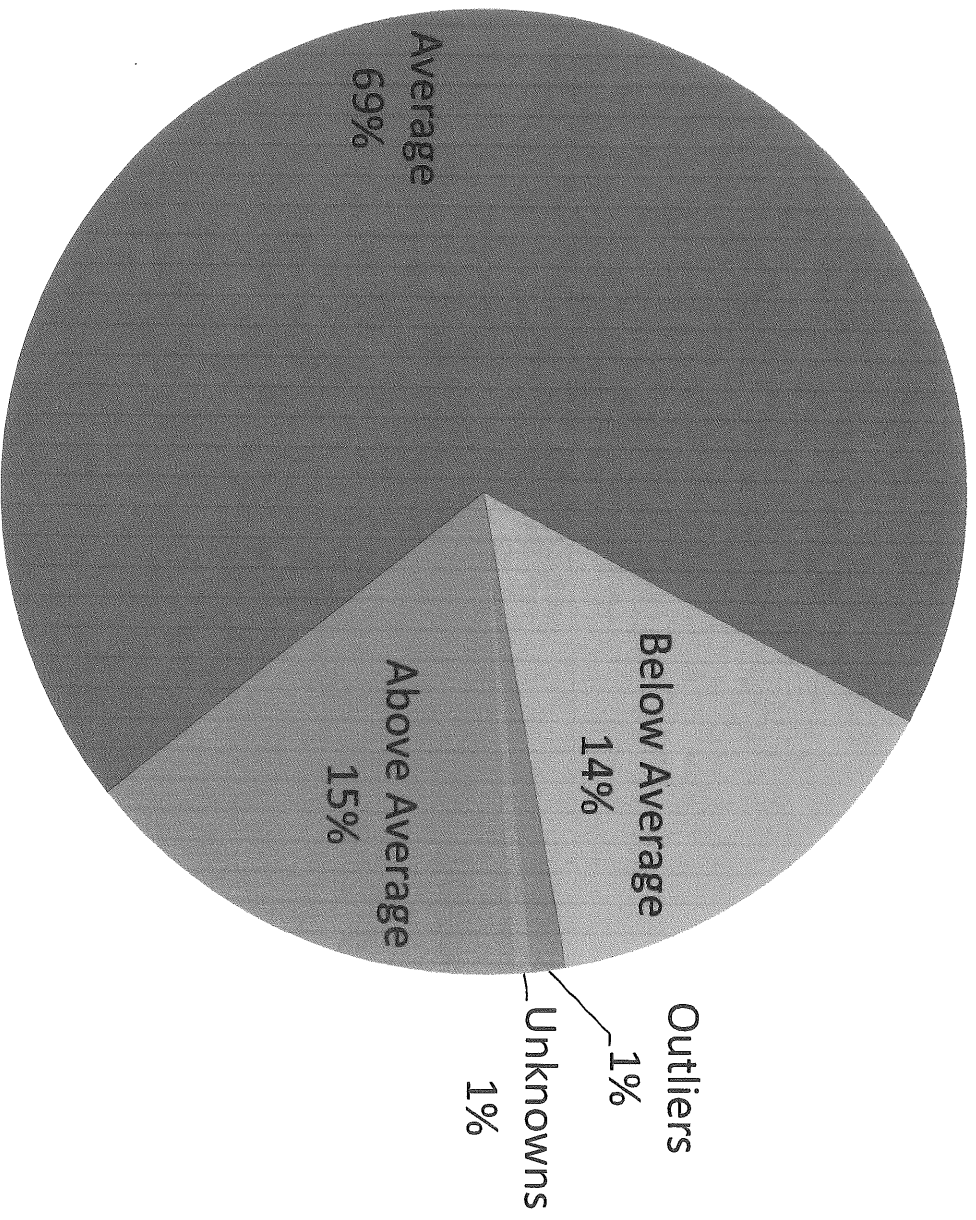


Figure 3c. Capacity as Assessed on Admission of Girls Entering the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, 1873 – 1877, 1881-1884



level. What is more, 59% of girls had basic or above average reading skills; while another 65% demonstrate basic or above average writing skills. With that being said, the documents show that a majority of the girls have an average to above average intelligence level,³⁰ therefore challenging the idea that girls' low education level necessitated reform. This information is in complete contrast with what Sarah Smith claimed, "...few have even a common school education, proving the long admitted theory; ignorance is the mother of vice."³¹

Figure 4 (*Health*) shows the health of the girls for the two subsets with completed data ranging from 1873-1877 and again from 1881 -1884. The records show 259 girls (73%) came into the facility with "good" health, and another 22 came in with "average" health. For the category of "bad health" there were 65 (18%) girls listed. Interestingly, there were several girls listed as "delicate,"³² which we can assume meant "pregnant" due to the vernacular of the time. This could be an explanation for the 7 babies that were reported to have been born on the reformatory side in the 1881 investigation.³³ It is important to note that neither Superintendent Smith nor Dr. Theophilus Parvin, the institution's physician, mentioned any births on the reformatory side in any annual report.

The registry's former surroundings and remarks sections included many comments that we felt were cause for further investigation. For the purposes of this paper we have selected a few cases to discuss. For instance, Mary Foley, 14 at the age of entrance, spent roughly 4 years in the institution before being sent out on a "ticket-of-leave" on April 5, 1886, to work for the

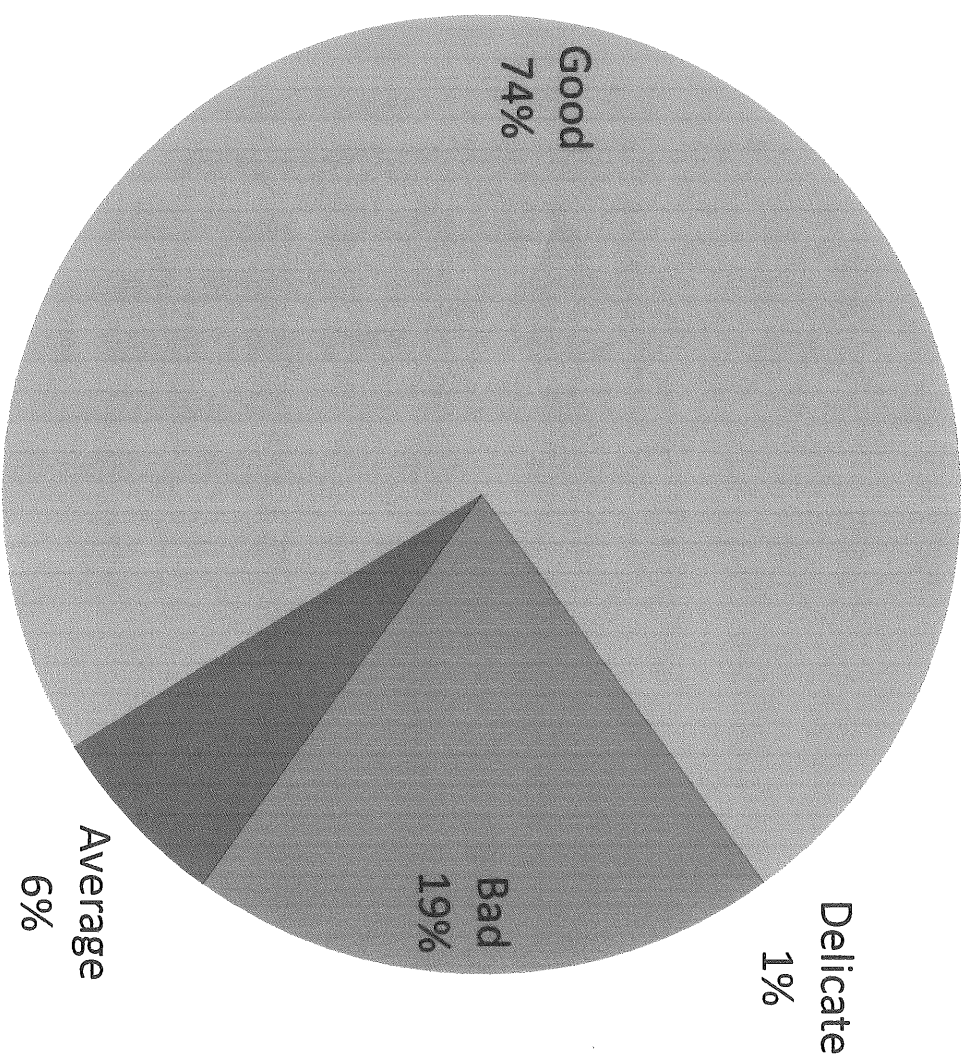
³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Eighth AR, 13

³² "The Official Registry of The Indiana Reformatory Institution For Women and Girls" 1873-1884. (n.d.).

³³"The Reformatory: Mrs. Sarah Jane Smith, the Superintendent, Presents Her Case to the Committee. And details the Methods of Management and Punishment, and the Results of her Reform Work." *The Indianapolis Journal*. February 5, 1881.

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



Budd family.³⁴ In a newspaper article from the *Indianapolis Star* on September 29, 1886, we learn 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 would lead to her death a few days later. Both the age and position of Mary are contradictory to what we know about her from the registry, which further illuminates the inconsistencies of the record keeping at the Reformatory.³⁵

There are many cases of record-keeping irregularities throughout the registry that occasionally provide contradictory and confusing information for the girls. In order to give a few examples we have selected a few of them that seem curious. In one case, 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.³⁶ Anna Merrick, 12, was said 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.³⁷ Both Mary Mathingly and Anna Merrick call into question the relevance of the information in those specific categories.

Additionally, a case for concern was the Mackey sisters who both died in the institution, almost exactly 2 years apart. The Mackey sisters, Rachel, 9 and Narcissa, 11, both arrived on February 28, 1874; they were colored orphans from Wayne County and neither was charged with

³⁴ “The Official Registry of The Indiana Reformatory Institution For Women and Girls” 1873-1884. (n.d.).

³⁵ “A Girl Frightfully Burned.” *The Indianapolis Star*. September 29, 1886.

³⁶ “The Official Registry of The Indiana Reformatory Institution For Women and Girls” 1873-1884. (n.d.).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

any crime. The older sister, Narcissa, died on May 11, 1875, of “pulmonary tuberculosis.”³⁸ Her sister Rachel died of “pulmonary consumption” in May of 1877.³⁹ Both of the girls’ records reflect good health entering the institution, but Dr. Parvin stated in the annual report that the illness was passed on from the mother.⁴⁰ However, with the knowledge that the sisters had good health at their intake, it seems implausible that the girls entered the facility with a disease of this caliber without it being recognized by staff upon examination. Furthermore, it calls into question the odds of two orphaned sisters both dying under the care of the same doctor in such a short time frame.

Despite several uncommon cases that have inconsistent information in the registry, we are still able to construct an image of the average girl detained at the institution. We can deduce that she would have been 14 years of age, white, and come from a home with at least one living parent. This girl would be of average to above average intellect with good health. She also would never have been charged with nor committed any crime. The average girl would have spent between 2 to 4 years in the institution, time in which she would have been learning the skills necessary to be an effective homemaker.

LABOR VS. EDUCATION

A great irony, or perhaps intentional design, emerges upon investigation of the vocational training in contrast with the education offered the young girls in the reformatory. The ironies we refer to are the facts that well educated, career driven, and politically motivated women were teaching girls the importance of economic self-sufficiency exclusively by way of the domestic arts; the exact opposite of the idea of femininity they themselves subscribed to, while offering

³⁸ Fourth AR ,p.23

³⁹ Sixth AR, p.13

⁴⁰ Fourth AR, p.23

minimal education. Furthermore, as Freedman points out, they were being taught vocations that were known to earn meager wages such as domestic servants, laundresses, and unskilled factory workers. It is those very jobs that may have led these girls back to the streets from whence they came in order to try and supplement such insufficient income.⁴¹ 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."⁴² Of these goals the officials obviously placed the highest value on the use of forced labor, for reasons not necessarily in the best interest to the poor children who suffered said drudge, but for power, control, and profit. At no point throughout the first eleven years of annual reports written by either the Board of Managers or Smith herself is this fact hidden.

The plans to exploit the girls laboriously are stated plainly 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."⁴³ Using the girls as unpaid employees at the very institution they were compelled to live in was a method of ensuring that investors profited, that Smith and Coffin maintained control over the girls and attained the power and prestige awarded them 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 poor 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:

⁴¹ Freedman, *Sisters*, 42

⁴² Jones, 8

⁴³ First AR, 12

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 as indispensable for all.⁴⁴

Again in the 1877 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 servant.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most blatant boasting of this indentured servitude is stated again 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."⁴⁶ They later referred to the girls as servants when the reformatory purchased cows in 1877, "This furnished useful employment for the older girls and increased their efficiency as servants."⁴⁷

In selecting remunerative work for the girls, the Board made a list of requirements such as, "work that the girl can continue after release, work that is not degrading but fit for a woman, work that will not interfere with other *honest* (emphasis added) working women in Indianapolis, and finally it must be profitable to the institution."⁴⁸ Through our interpretation of the several sources in our research it becomes sadly 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 passages in the annual reports by both Smith, "...we find...no work

⁴⁴ "Fifth Annual Report of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: Sentinel Company, 1877, December 31, 1876. 14

⁴⁵ Sixth AR, 7

⁴⁶ Thirteenth AR, 11

⁴⁷ Sixth AR, p.7

⁴⁸ Fifth AR, p.15

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..."⁴⁹, and Coffin, "...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."⁵⁰ It is clear that these girls had more faith in their abilities and held higher aspirations for themselves and their future 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:

Among the children in the reform department there are 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 the state go a step further by giving those who manifest talent commencement in education for such work book keeping, music teaching, telegraphy, 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.⁵¹

He even went a step further in his 1876 report to the Governor offering himself as instructor to train some of the girls as nurses.⁵² To no avail, his *outlandish* ideas fell on deaf ears, and the machinations of the institution continued on with business as usual. The Board's response to these requests was, "...we do not aim to give the pupils in the reform school a finished

⁴⁹ Eighth AR, 12

⁵⁰ "Ninth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: Carlon & Hollenbeck, Printers and Binders. 1881. October 31, 1880. 8

⁵¹ Third AR, 30-31

⁵² Fifth AR, 47

education.”⁵³ “A common, plain education only is given. No attempt is made in higher branches.”⁵⁴

Several times throughout the first thirteen annual reports the Superintendent and Board claimed that the girls “attend school half of the day, and work in rotation the other half.”⁵⁵ However, this claim is contradicted in the reports that actually breakdown the girls’ day allotting only 3 hours to school, 6 hours to work, 5 hours for meals, recreation and religious exercises, and 10 hours for sleep.⁵⁶ This remained the schedule until 1884 when work changed from 6 to 7 hours, cutting back an hour from meals, recreation and religious exercises.⁵⁷

The responsibility for teaching an estimated class size of 140⁵⁸ fell to only one employed teacher, Miss Pray. One teacher just wasn’t enough and so the solution to this problem was to have the older girls teach the younger ones,⁵⁹ and the criminal women on the penal side in the evenings; teaching 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th level grammar books, Arithmetic, Geography, and Physiology.⁶⁰ The reformatory not only had girls doing a job for no compensation that they saw fit to pay a woman \$400 per annum⁶¹ to do, but also a job that they have insinuated all along was an occupation above the girls’ class and social standing.

⁵³ Seventh AR, 9

⁵⁴ "Eleventh Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: WM. B. Burford, State Printer. October 31, 1882. 17 The importance the state actually placed on the girl’s education is further evidenced with the fact that appropriations were asked for a library in almost all eleven annual reports, with no success.

⁵⁵ Ninth AR, 7

⁵⁶ Eighth AR, 45

⁵⁷ Thirteenth AR, 64

⁵⁸ Ibid., 17

⁵⁹ Fifth AR, 13

⁶⁰ Seventh AR, 13

⁶¹ Second AR, 2

The annual reports provide a concise description of the 6 hours per day dedicated to work:

The girls are engaged in cane seating chairs, laundry work, knitting, sewing and obtaining a general knowledge of housework. 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.

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.⁶²

Originally the laundry rooms were located in the reformatory basement. The fumes of the lye soap used and the constant damp air, along with most likely the presence of mold, would have posed a serious health hazard to the girls. Yet the Board’s main concern was not their health, but rather that the area was too small, and only half of the numbers of girls were washing than should have been. They asked the state for the money to build a separate, larger laundry room outside, the perk being that doing so would “make available two large much needed work rooms.”⁶³ Once the new laundry rooms were built in 1880, the number of girls working there more than doubled.⁶⁴

Not even the smallest child was unburdened of this slave labor. Sarah Smith believed “our labors though arduous, are not, and we fear never will 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.”⁶⁵ These *physically weak* children, as young as 3, worked

⁶² Ninth AR, 8

⁶³ Seventh AR, 14

⁶⁴ Eleventh AR, 15

⁶⁵ Seventh AR, 19

“cane-seating chairs,” and turned out a total of 3,045 in 1882⁶⁶, and 4,500 in 1884 alone.⁶⁷ Other girls were “profitably employed” sewing and repairing all the clothes for the institution, as well as those of other facilities. To get an idea of what was expected of them per day, consider the total number of pieces they put out for the years of 1876 (3,384),⁶⁸ 1878 (2,808),⁶⁹ and in 1884 (3,122).⁷⁰

In 1874 the Board adopted a system they termed “Ticket-of-Leave”,⁷¹ an early form of a parole/work release, or perhaps simply a leased labor scheme. As Superintendent, Sarah Smith decided who she would allow the opportunity to leave the reformatory to go work in a community member’s home as a domestic servant.⁷² Still there were stipulations for this conditional release. To be granted the privilege of their freedom, they had to be able to cook well, bake the best sort of bread, make a dress and do laundry in the new style.⁷³

If the Registry is accurate 226 girls went out at one point or another on “Ticket-of-Leave.”⁷⁴ One of these young girls, whose identity was withheld in the newspapers, had been reportedly sent to work in General Straight’s home. In 1878 the girl returned to the reformatory in *delicate* condition. According to the periodical, one of the lady managers visited Straight’s house 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, he asked her how much

⁶⁶ Eleventh AR, 58

⁶⁷ Thirteenth AR, 64

⁶⁸ Fifth AR, 26-27

⁶⁹ Seventh AR, 22

⁷⁰ Thirteenth AR, 64

⁷¹ Third AR, 12. The Indiana reformatory was not the originator of this concept. Freedman gives a detailed description of the Framingham Institution in Massachusetts, which the Coffins visited, that originally implemented the concept they named the “indenture program”. It is documented in her book that the girls sent out as domestic servants were paid by the family between \$1.25-\$2.50 a week, however it is not stated in the annual reports or in any of our sources that the Indiana girls were paid (Freedman, *Sisters*, 37)

⁷² Third AR, p.12

⁷³ Fifth AR, p. 17

⁷⁴ “The Official Registry of The Indiana Reformatory Institution For Women and Girls” 1873-1884. (n.d.).

it would take to keep the matter quiet, and according to Straight he had witnesses hiding in the other room that heard this “blackmail” taking place. Not surprisingly the General denied and was considered innocent of these scandalous charges by the author of the newspaper.⁷⁵ Later in the 1881 investigation, Straight is called as a witness by the chairman of the investigating committee. He is allowed a twenty minute private audience with the committee, prosecutors and lawyers, and permitted to leave afterward without ever having given a public statement.⁷⁶ No more is ever said of the matter, including what happened to the poor girl and her baby.

In the thirteenth annual report it says, “63 girls are out on ticket of leave throughout various parts of the state, this system we consider one of the largest factors in working out reformation.”⁷⁷ 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. Be that as it may, it is clear that the institution was in fact still the one profiting in this collaboration. With the girl still considered a ward to the reformatory while on “ticket-of-leave,”⁷⁸ the county from whence she came was still responsible for the payment of its yearly portion of her housing costs. With a girl gone, her otherwise occupied bed was empty and able to be filled by a new commitment.⁷⁹ This is double the payments for half the expense, a rather lucrative business plan for the reformatory.

RELIGION

Though a great deal of time and emphasis were placed on education and domesticity, religion was at the root of Smith and Coffin’s ideology for reform, “that with love, education, training,

⁷⁵ “What is Supposed to Have Been Gen. Streight’s Statement to the Reformatory Committee” *The People*. January 29, 1881.

⁷⁶ “Andersonville Investigation of the Indiana Female Reformatory: Horrible Condition of the Unfortunate Inmates. Vermin, Disease and cruel Treatment.” *The Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*. January 28, 1881.

⁷⁷ Thirteenth AR, 10

⁷⁸ Third AR, 12

⁷⁹ Freedman, *Sisters*, 94

and spiritual development, these girls could be reformed into noble women, able to be what God created them to be: ‘wives, mothers, and teachers of children’.⁸⁰ 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.”⁸¹ Religious services were an integral cog in the reformatory system as part of the process of changing these young girls into “true women.” The importance of religion in the process is shown by the Board’s decision to refuse reformation to those unwilling to embrace the faith. In one instance, Amelia Stout, a girl less than 16 years of age from Marion County, had arrived at the institution on May 15, 1876 only to be “liberated by the board on account of poor faith October 6, 1876.”⁸²

The girls were required to attend morning and evening Bible studies, as well as Sabbath services which were held 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.”⁸³ 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.”⁸⁴ His time with them was spent reminding them of the good things of home: innocence, mother, and missed opportunities, which caused the girls to desire better lives and to be thankful for his teaching.⁸⁵ Marrow later took Rosa

⁸⁰ Fourth AR, 27

⁸¹ Third AR, 17

⁸² “The Official Registry of The Indiana Reformatory Institution For Women and Girls”. 1873-1884.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Fourth AR, 11

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Hills (A.K.A. Susie Hills), 15, who had arrived at the facility in 1883, out on a “ticket-of-leave” to Eaton, Ohio.⁸⁶

Smith and Coffin continually expressed their appreciation for the men who held services in the facility. Several reports discussed the gratitude that had been reported by the girls in the reformatory as well. In one report Smith writes, “the Young Men’s Christian Association who 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.”⁸⁷ The continual praises 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 into 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.⁸⁸

These reports all have one thing in common: they are centered on Smith’s beliefs that with God’s love and training, girls can and will be reformed, as long as they conform 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 the good results and barely spoke of anything that was of negative response to this system. It is hard to gauge accurate results of the religious

⁸⁶ "The Official Registry of The Indiana Reformatory Institution For Women and Girls". 1873-1884.

⁸⁷ Second AR, 16

⁸⁸ Third AR , 16

programming without complete details of both successes and failures. This is not the only area of confusion concerning details in reports. Yet another area of confusion is found in the area of the punishment rendered to the girls in the spirit of reform, highlighted in the investigation of 1881.

PUNISHMENT AND RESISTANCE

In the 1881 investigation, the reformatory, specifically Sarah Smith, was accused of “uncommon cruelty”⁸⁹ towards the girls and women of the institution. Previous employees, eye witnesses, and some of the inmates themselves came forward with stories of unethical abuse. Much was revealed about the institution’s scandalous happenings behind closed doors with weeks worth of candid testimony during the investigation, which was splashed across the papers. An investigation committee of five men was designated to determine whether the treatment of inmates was too abusive or in the acceptable guidelines of punishment.⁹⁰

Several witnesses were called to testify. Among them was Mrs. Charlotte Brown, who lived near the reformatory. Brown had Jennie Solomon, out on a ticket of leave, living with her. Brown stated in the report that Solomon had gotten “saucy” with her, and subsequently reported Solomon’s insubordination to Smith. Smith quickly requested Solomon to be seen, and upon Solomon’s return to Brown’s residence, Brown reports that Solomon returned with “marks on her face and eyebrow.”⁹¹ 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

⁸⁹ "The Female Reformatory: Mr. Edwins, chairman of the Reformatory investigation committee, presented the following report:" *Indianapolis Journal*. February 25, 1881.

⁹⁰ "Nearing The Close Of The Reformatory Investigation." 1881.

⁹¹ "Christian Punishment At Indiana's Female Reformatory." *The People*. February 5, 1881.

behind the door until they asked for forgiveness.” Shaw admitted that Smith “turned the hose on some...[and vocalized that]... but thought they didn’t get punished enough.”⁹²

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 that came forward as victims. Haines, 15, spent 2 years at the institution. 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...having my head put under faucets of cold water” until she could no longer breathe.⁹³

Harris’ statement was similar to Haines’ in nature 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.” She goes on to say that she was “ducked and beat,” and when she tried to get away, “they got me down and beat me.” Afterwards, Harris was sent to the Insane Asylum even though she was not insane. This was further verified through the remarks section of the registries.⁹⁴

The most revealing and shocking testimony came from Smith herself, *The Sentinal* reported:

I have punished ...with the cold water process. The first time was done to the two girls who attempted to burn the building...then 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.

She goes on to admit:

⁹² “Nearing The Close Of The Reformatory Investigation.” 1881.

⁹³ “The Ducking Tub.” *The People*. January 29, 1881.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

Small girls were whipped with a slipper on their bare bodies. I have slapped them in the face...held them by their hair...I did get the McIntyre girl on the floor...until she confessed disobeying...I turned the hose on Ida Harris...Mattie Scott and Sallie Maxwell both had the hose turned on them...and Sallie was whipped because she wouldn't mind... had been but 14 times the bathtub was used in 7 years ...I never kept any in the tub more than 5 minutes.

Smith admits there was, in fact, a baby found in the cesspool, but denied the baby's mother was an inmate at the institution. She also denied:

I never bumped the heads of the inmates against the wall. I never caused the deafness of Lizzie Cash (Elizabeth Cash)...she was always a little deaf...the night watchman never had the girls in the water closets.

Smith justifies the treatment:

I wanted them to ...conform to the rules. Our lives have been threatened. The board of visitors, with the exception of Coffin was not of impression that the punishment was too severe.⁹⁵

Despite what should be considered Smith's own damning testimony, the committee exonerated them of any wrong doing through their reports in the *Indianapolis Journal*, where Chairman Edwins stated:

...that the charges. . .were not sustained by the evidence. . .the discipline is maintained by kindness and appeals to the moral sense of inmates. . . punishment has been severe but. . .necessary. . .not out of proportion with the offense.

The report by the committee even goes as far as to "commend the Board of Managers and the Superintendent for the wisdom and vigor for which they have conducted their affairs."⁹⁶

Smith further informed the committee that the girl's impudence was worse now than ever by sassing, "you dare not whip us, if you do, I'll tell the gentlemen when they come around, you

⁹⁵ "Nearing The Close Of The Reformatory Investigation". 1881

⁹⁶ "The Female Reformatory: Mr. Edwins, chairman of the Reformatory investigation committee, presented the following report:." *The Indianapolis Journal*. February 25, 1881.

are going to be turned out by the legislature, and we do not propose to mind anything you say."⁹⁷

The inmates, defeated by the victory of the reformatory, were compelled to continue their previous modes of resistance, running away and setting fires to the building. According to the annual reports for the first eleven years, 50 girls ran away, suggesting that the circumstances at the reformatory were just too distressing for some. The investigation took its toll on both Smith and Coffin. Coffin sent her resignation to the Governor that same year, and Mrs. Hendricks took her place as President.⁹⁸ Smith and Dr. Parvin both followed shortly after Coffin, 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. Ten years ago my husband accepted the office of steward, to help me build up an Institution he knew I had long desired."⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

The idea of reform for unruly children was conceptualized long before Sarah Smith and Rhoda Coffin began their quest to open the reformatory. Smith and Coffin merely put a different spin on it through a concept of love and both religious and vocational training as an antidote for bad behavior. Their ideology and influence gained the support from politicians of that time allowing them the ability to not only open and run their Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, but also play a part in getting laws changed to include higher age levels for entering and

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ "The Female Reformatory: Mrs. Rhoda M. Coffin, the President, Sends In Her Resignation as a Member of the Board of Managers." *The Indianapolis Journal*. April 5, 1881: 8. Charles Coffin, The President of the Richmond National Bank caused the banks' collapse in 1884 by making too many unsecured loans. This destroyed the livelihood of many of the community's depositors, even leading to suicides. The Coffins fled to Chicago to avoid arrest, and were disowned by their Quaker community. Ironically, the Coffin's misdeeds cost people exponentially more than the total amount of the economic crimes committed by those they had incarcerated. (Baldwin, *Counterfeit*, 10-11)

⁹⁹ "Twelfth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls." Indianapolis, IN: WM. B. Burford, Lithographer, Printer, Stationer, and Binder. 1884., October 31, 1883. 15

exiting the institution. Though their ideology on its surface seemed honorable and noble, it clearly had a sullied underbelly.

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.”¹⁰⁰ The very prospect of escaping the terror of the reformatory by earning it through manual labor is a cruel incentive. It was then followed up with the impending fear of returning to the institution to suffer the wrath of Sarah Smith if they failed to please the family that they were sent out to serve through the “ticket-of-leave” system. Smith understood very well that the system by design would hold the girls psychologically hostage, as she avows, “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.”¹⁰¹ This form of psychoactive terrorism is the epitome of Coffin’s statement, “for without labor we could not control them.”¹⁰² Profit, power, and control is exactly what we sense was the idea in the first place. Our research has increased our interest and so we intend to dig deeper into this story. We plan to follow the money trail in the future, and obtain a clearer picture of what the “ticket-of-leave” system entailed. We also want to dig deeper into the political connections and motivations we believe fueled many of the injustices done to the girls.

¹⁰⁰ “Nearing The Close Of The Reformatory Investigation”. 1881

¹⁰¹ Eighth AR, 12

¹⁰² Ninth AR, 15

Bibliography

- Baldwin, Kimberly. "*Counterfeit Decency: Charity as Exploitation in the Creation of Women's Reformatories.*" Indianapolis: Unpublished paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Historical Society. January 6, 2016.
- Eighth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: Douglas & Carlon, Printers and Binders. 1879. October 31, 1879.
- Eleventh Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: WM. B. Burford, State Printer. 1882. October 31, 1882.
- Fifth Annual Report of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: Sentinel Company, 1877. December 31, 1876.
- First Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis. January 18, 1871.
- Fourth Annual Report of the Indiana Reformatory for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: Sentinel Company. December 31, 1875.
- Freedman, Estelle B. "*Their Sister's Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930*". Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. 1984.
- Jones, Michelle. "*Failing the Fallen: Sexual and Gendered Violence.*" Indianapolis: Unpublished paper presented at the American Historical Association. January 6, 2016.
- Ninth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: Carlon & Hollenbeck, Printers and Binders. 1881. October 31, 1880.
- Second Annual Report of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: Sentinel Company, 1874. January 1, 1874.
- Seventh Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Journal Company, State Printers, 1878. October 31, 1878.
- Sixth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Journal Company, State Printers, 1878. October 31, 1877.
- Tenth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: WM. B. Burford, State Printer. 1882. October 31, 1881.
- The Indianapolis Journal*. "The Female Reformatory: Mr. Edwins, Chairman of the Reformatory Investigation Committee, Presented the Following Report:." February 25, 1881.
- The Indianapolis Journal*. "The Female Reformatory: Mrs. Rhoda M. Coffin, The President, Sends In Her Resignation as a Member of the Board of Managers." April 5, 1881. p. 8.

The Indianapolis Journal. "The Reformatory An Investigation of Charges of Cruelty Commences by the Legislative Committee." January 25, 1881.

The Indianapolis Journal. "The Reformatory: Mrs. Sarah Jane Smith, the Superintendent, Presents Her Case to the Committee. And details the Methods of Management and Punishment, and the Results of her Reform Work." February 5, 1881.

The Indianapolis Star. "A Girl Frightfully Burned." September 29, 1886.

"The Official Registry of The Indiana Reformatory Institution For Women and Girls." 1873-1884. (n.d.).

The People. "Christian Punishment At Indiana's Female Reformatory." February 5, 1881.

The People. "The Ducking Tub." January 29, 1881.

The People. "What is Supposed to Have Been Gen. Streight's Statement to the Reformatory Committee." January 29, 1881.

The Sentinel. "Female Convicts: How They Are Treated in the Indiana State Reformatory." September 25, 1881.

The Sentinel. "Nearing the Close of the Reformatory Investigation." February 9, 1881.

The Sentinel. "The Female Reformatory Newspaper Comment Upon Mrs. Rhoda M. Coffin's Resignation." April 7, 1881.

Third Annual Report of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: Sentinel Company, 1875. December 31, 1874.

Thirteenth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls.. Indianapolis, IN: WM. B. Burford, Contractor for State Printing and Binding. 1884. October 31, 1884.

Twelfth Annual Report of the Managers of the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls. Indianapolis, IN: WM. B. Burford, Lithographer, Printer, Stationer, and Binder. 1884. October 31, 1883.