**Document of the Month: Annual Report of the Indiana State Farm**

This month’s document highlights one of Indiana’s prison systems, the Indiana State Farm at Putnamville, Indiana. In the 1913 Acts of Indiana, Chapter 236, is the law creating the Indiana State Farm. A law approved on March 2, 1907 was passed regarding the management and control of the State benevolent, reformatory, and penal institutions.

Most people are familiar with various State Prisons in Indiana, but few know about the State Farm and how it came into existence. The State Farm was created as a result of a “jail problem in all its phases, and considered the feasibility of doing away with the jail as a place for the punishment of misdemeanants (minor offenders) to distinguish them from those guilty of more serious offenses (felonies). Someone suggested that to place them in a state-owned farm instead of jails,” according to the First Annual Report (Sept. 30, 1915). It was believed that if offenders could be placed in the open and in the sunshine, close to nature, they would be given a better opportunity to improve themselves.

The Board of State Charities was instrumental in creating the State Farm, along with the Chambers of Commerce across Indiana (notably Richmond), and the Governor at the time. House Bill 471 was approved March 14, 1913, and was formulated and enacted into law, providing for the appointment by the Governor of four Commissioners to select a site for a farm of no less than 500 acres, appropriating $60,000 for its purchase.

The library holds the annual reports of the Indiana State Farm which provide details into the state’s early prison system. They offer demographic information on prisoners, such as age, race, birthplace, population by county, and types of offenses committed. For example, in 1915 a person could be sent to the State Farm for adultery (nine people); cruelty to animals (two people); and using profanity (one person). Some later reports also list prisoners who died with cause of death and age. Also listed are the various fruits, vegetables, and livestock that were grown and raised on the farm. These and many other interesting facts can be found in the Indiana Collection, ISLI 365.44 I385fr for the years 1915 to 1980.