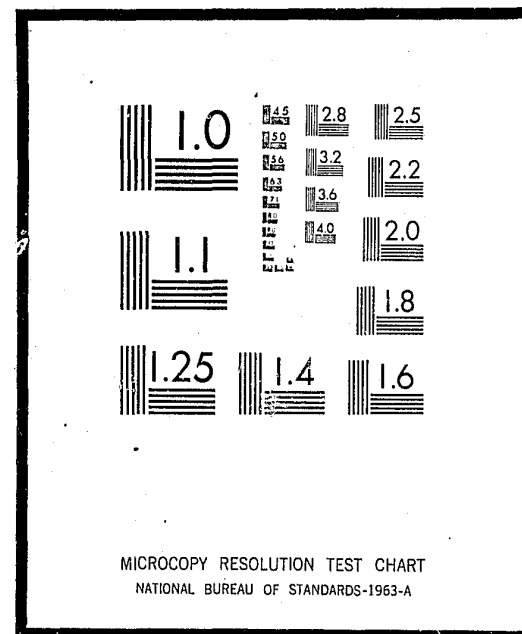


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## TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: A BRIEF HISTORY

JANUARY 1974

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
TREATMENT DIRECTORATE  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
HUNTSVILLE, TEXAS 77340

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## ABSTRACT

Stone, William E., C. Calvin McAdams, and Johanna Kollert. **Texas Department of Corrections: A Brief History.** Research and Development Division Report, Huntsville, Texas: Texas Department of Corrections. pp. 44.

This document presents a brief history of the Texas Department of Corrections from its beginning to its present state. Each major period of development is discussed and highlights from the period presented. The final chapter provides an overview of what the Department looks like today including details of interest on each of the 14 separate units that are maintained by the Department.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Texas Department of Corrections has been in operation under one name or the other for around 125 years. During this century and a quarter, the system has been one of the worst and one of the best penal institutions in the nation. The system started in 1849 with three prisoners and by 1973 had become the second largest state prison system in the nation.

In the history of the Texas prison system there have been both colorful times and colorful people. Among these were Satanta and Big Tree — Kiowa Indian chiefs — convicted of murder. They entered the penitentiary in 1871 and were released by Governor Davis in 1873 upon the recommendation of President Grant. Satanta violated the conditions of his release, however, and was returned by Lt. General Phillip Sheridan on November 8, 1874. He committed suicide 2 years later by jumping from the second floor of the hospital building. He was buried in the prison cemetery and remained there until his remains were removed by the Kiowa tribe in recent times.

The most notorious man ever to serve in the state penitentiary was John Wesley Hardin, the son of a Methodist preacher, from Bonham. He murdered approximately 20 men both inside and outside of the penitentiary. He served only 16 years, however, for all his crimes.

Jesse Evans, a partner in crime with Billy the Kid, served 1 year and 5 months on a 30-year sentence for murder and robbery before he escaped in 1882 and was never captured again.

It is noted that during the 1800's cattle or horse theft was considered a much greater crime than murder insofar as prison sentences were concerned. During the same term of court in an East Texas county, one man received 4 months for murder, whereas another received 5 years for cattle theft.

The first woman convict was Elizabeth Huffman in 1854. She was sentenced to 1 year for infanticide.

Each convict was required to list his occupation upon entering the penitentiary. The most unusual occupation ever listed was "Gentleman Loafer." The most unusual offense was "worthlessness." "James H. Turner, a Negro soldier, by general worthlessness and by lying, stealing, drinking intoxicating liquors and other persistent meanness has become totally unfit in deportment and character for a soldier ...." He was sentenced to 3 years in December 1872.

The shortest sentence on record was for 1 hour for William Saunders from Dallas on November 15, 1870.

The youngest convict ever received at the penitentiary was a 9-year-old Negro boy sentenced in 1887 to 5 years for robbery. In January 1889, when the House of Correction and Reformatory was opened in Gatesville, he was transferred to that institution along with 15 other convicts between the ages of 9 and 16 then at Huntsville. Up to that time, 22 boys under the age of 16 had been received at the penitentiary.

The youngest girl ever received at the penitentiary was a mulatto, 11 years of age, sentenced to 3 years for administering poison. She arrived in 1884 and served 2 years and 8 months.

The youngest murderer to enter the penitentiary was a Negro boy, 12 years of age, sentenced to 10 years for second degree murder. He served 8 years.

During June 1881, J. R. Sprivey and Riley Sprivey each received sentences from Wilson County for horse and cattle theft, respectively. Upon arrival at the penitentiary each was given a number and it was not realized until several months later than J. R. and Riley Sprivey were one and the same person. He became the only prisoner to serve with two numbers at the same time.

The electric chair is located at the **Huntsville Unit**; however, primarily because of court actions there have been no executions since July 30, 1964. Since the electric chair was first used on February 8, 1924, there have been 365 executions. The largest number of executions in one year was 20 in 1935 and the second largest was 18 in 1938.

The aforementioned bits of information, while interesting, are nothing more than trivia, and one can never hope to understand the modern prison system by looking at them. The only way to understand the modern Department of Corrections is to understand the history and the roots of the entire system, not just a few scattered incidents. This document is designed to provide a history of the entire prison system in this state.

## THE FORMATION OF A PRISON SYSTEM

In 1829 the Congress of the Mexican state of Coahuila y Texas adopted resolutions to establish the first prison in Texas. The structure was to be of the panoptican type, which had its guards situated in such a position that they could observe all the prisoners at all times without being seen by them. Contractors were to build these prisons at their own expense, with machinery and tools to be operated by convict labor and with all proceeds of the convict labor being used to reimburse the contractors. The contractor had a duty to teach all prisoners an honorable trade. Weavers were to be furnished looms and ceramic workers furnished wheels. When a prisoner finished his term of imprisonment, he was to be sent to the town of his choice, where he would be under "immediate inspection of the local authorities." He was also to be given \$30 and the tools of his trade.

After the Texas rebellion against Mexico, which set up the Republic of Texas, prisoners were confined to the county jails where existent. For this purpose the Congress of the infant republic had allocated \$15,000 to meet the obligations incurred under the statutes subtitled "Sheriffs - Fees - Keeping Prisoners." It seems that rehabilitation of the prisoners did not figure either in jail design or in the sheriffs' conduct. Sheriffs were probably interested more in the prospects of high fees than in rehabilitation.

The first act for the establishment of a penitentiary was passed January 4, 1842, and was commented upon as follows, January 5, 1842, by the **Telegraph and Texas Register**, a leading newspaper of the time, published at Houston:

The bill to establish a penitentiary has passed both Houses of Congress and probably ere this has been signed by the President and become a law. We hail the passage of this bill as a new era in the history of our country. Vice and crime can no longer stalk abroad in our land with impunity. And from this period we may date a new impulse to moral improvement. The laws that have heretofore been in operation for the punishment of crime were of so sanguinary a character that they defeated the very object for which they were intended and criminals were permitted to escape unpunished because these laws were considered too severe. This state of things will no longer exist, the criminal code will be so adapted in the situation of the country and the state of public opinion that the laws will be enforced with promptness and certainty.

The predictions of the **Telegraph and Texas Register** were premature, as no steps were taken under the foregoing enactment. The appropriation, \$2,000, was found to be too small for the purpose for which it was intended, and the succeeding legislature did not consider it expedient in view of the condition of the treasury to authorize a larger expenditure.

After Texas became a state in 1845, lawmakers became concerned about bills that would be presented before the Second Legislature for the establishment of a penitentiary. This concern is noted in a letter written by Guy W. Bryan in 1848:

The legislature meets on the 13th. We will have some interesting questions by the time we get there, the public debt and public domain. I wish you to send me by mail (as soon as you can) all the information you can get relative to

penitentiaries. The question of erecting a penitentiary will come up this session. I am most anxious for the erection of one in our state, and wish to get all the information on the subject that is in my reach, in order to be well fortified on this, my favorite measure of the session . . . .

The Texas legislature passed on May 1, 1848, an act authorizing the governor to establish a commission of three members that would select a site for a prison. John Brown, William Menifer, and William Palmer were selected as commissioners. The legislature also appropriated \$10,000 for the operation of the institution. This amount was later changed to \$5,000.

The commission met at La Grange on the 26th of June to select a prison site. Governor George T. Wood was notified of their decision in a letter dated July 20, 1848, which read in part:

The undersigned commissioners appointed by you, ... beg leave to report ... That, after a thorough examination of the best localities, they agreed on the selection of a site and selected the same on a beautiful eminence in the town of Huntsville, the county seat of the county of Walker. The site for the buildings embraces two small tracts of four acres and eight tenths of an acre. They also purchased, near to the sites selected, a tract of ninety-four acres of timbered land, making together ninety-eight and eight tenths acres, for which they agreed to give the aggregate consideration of \$493. They also deemed it the interest of the State and the Penitentiary to secure rock privileges, which they have done, as will be seen by the deeds accompanying this report, and also the use of one hundred acres of white oak timber standing convenient to the location.

The undersigned present herewith a deed from Robert Smither for three and two tenths acres, a deed from Isaac McGary for one and six tenths acres, embracing the site for the Buildings; also a deed from Pleasant Gray for ninety-four acres. The undersigned would recommend that your Excellency direct the Comptroller of the State to issue warrants upon the Treasury to the above named gentlemen for the sums agreed to be paid them respectively, and mentioned as the consideration of the lands in the deeds of purchase.

They also present herewith three deeds for rock privileges, and one for white oak timber.

The titles to the lands purchased have been investigated, and found to be indisputable.

The undersigned believe the sites selected to embrace nearly all the advantages contemplated in the act and more of them than they could find united in other places.

After the prison system was established and a permanent site was selected, the physical construction of a unit was the next logical step. In 1848 the prison superintendent, A. H. Cook, submitted a plan for the penitentiary building at Huntsville. This plan was approved by Governor George T. Wood in August of 1848 and construction on the unit began.

It was during the building of the first unit of the penitentiary that the use of the chain gang was employed. This was considered the only safe way to prevent the convicts from running away. The chains were later used in fields for security purposes.

There were some convicts on hand when the superintendent appointed by the governor arrived. These were a carry-over from the county jails before Texas became a state in the Union. However, convicts were not numbered until the arrival of the first "chain" at the state penitentiary. Prisoner No. 1 was William G. Sansom, 58 years of age from Fayette County, sentenced to 3 years for cattle theft. He arrived in Huntsville October 1, 1849, and served 11 months before being pardoned by Governor Bell, September 14, 1850. Prisoner No. 2 was Stephen P. Terry, 37 years of age, sentenced to 10 years from Jefferson County for murder. He arrived at the penitentiary November 4, 1849. Less than 1 year later, however, Terry died of gunshot wounds inflicted by guards during an escape attempt. Prisoner No. 3 was Thomas Short, an 18-year-old youth from Washington County. He was sentenced to 2 years for stealing horses. He served his term in full.

The system progressed at a slow rate during these early years. Primarily this slow progress was the result of insufficient funds for operation. The directors asked for \$10,000 in 1850 for completion of construction and they were refused. On September 4, 1850, the legislature of the state of Texas appropriated \$4,000 to complete the construction of the penitentiary. This was in addition to the \$2,000 already appropriated in 1848 and it was often remarked in the legislature that the penitentiary was a heavy drain on the state treasury.

Possibly the best example of the state of the system has come to us in the form of a Directors Report dated November 10, 1851. The directors at this time were John S. Besser, R. Smither, and William M. Barrett.

The undersigned Directors respectfully report: That when they entered upon their duties as such, the penitentiary was (and still is) in its infancy, the outer wall of the block of cells erected not over five feet high, the ground open to all, and no security of the convicts from escape. Since that period, the outer wall has been completed and the cells enclosed and covered in; a kitchen and pantry has been created mainly by convict labor; all the cells on the south side of the block, together with a circular stairway to the upper tier of cells, with a walk and banisters on three sides of the building, together with a wagon shop, cabinet shop and blacksmith shop, have been finished and built by the convicts, without cost to the State, except for materials.

In the present exposed condition of the penitentiary grounds, an excess of guard is demanded. The employees of the penitentiary at this time consist of a sergeant of the guard at \$35 a month and six guards at \$30 a month and a master-workman in the wagon-making department at \$50 a month. No deaths up to September 30, 1851, except of S. P. Terry, a convict from Jefferson County, who was shot in an attempt to wrest a gun from the hands of a guard. There have been five escapes, three of whom were retaken and brought back.

On February 11, 1854, the state legislature appropriated \$40,000 with which to buy the machinery to erect a cotton mill behind the walls. The superintendent and the financial agent of the penitentiary were directed to produce cotton and woolen materials and to sell them to the best advantage of the State. Some of the cloth was made into clothing which was also sold to the public. All the funds received from the sale of any items produced by the penitentiary were placed in the state treasury to the account of the penitentiary. In 1856 a

huge warehouse was constructed for the storing of both raw materials and manufactured products. For safety purposes, it was constructed across the street from the walls. The manufacturing venture of the penitentiary prospered for some years as the Civil War approached. In fact, on March 6, 1863, the legislature directed the financial agent to go at the State's risk to the North and purchase additional machinery to enlarge the manufacturing facilities. He was also directed to employ outside help when convict labor was not adequate for the efficient operation of the factories. At the same time an extra appropriation of \$27,000 was made to buy cotton for the mills.

During the Civil War the penitentiary and its manufacturing facilities proved a tremendous asset to Texas. Although the prison population went down as more and more men went into the war, the prison was used as a prison camp for many Yankee prisoners of war. It is said that General Sam Houston often would push through the big iron gate shouting words of encouragement to the Yankee prisoners.

The factories of the penitentiary also produced clothing for the Texas soldiers, but much of the production went to help clothe the needy people left at home. Widows and orphans were granted aid in the form of clothing and other products of the penitentiary. However, this effort on the part of the State to help those in need was soon to be abused. Many of the products began to appear in what we know as the "black market" and sold at big profits by people who could not qualify to receive them. This practice became so bad that a law was passed on March 6, 1863 making the violation of the regulations controlling distribution and disposal of the goods a felony offense.

In spite of the fact that labor from the outside world was employed during the Civil War, the production was not sufficient to meet the demands upon the mills and the factories. For that reason convicts were borrowed from Louisiana and Arkansas to help operate at a higher speed. After the Civil War ended and conditions began to revert to normal, the warehouse of the prison was full of both raw materials and manufactured products. Factory production almost came to a standstill and idleness among the convicts ran high. By this time, the end of 1865, the population of the prison had grown to 165 inmates from the original 3 in 1849. At this point in history the Texas penitentiary was ripe for a major change.

## THE LEASE PERIOD

On November 12, 1866 the Texas Legislature passed a law permitting the superintendent to seek any gainful employment for the convicts. He was directed to place the convicts in gangs of not less than 20 men per gang and to work at building railroads and public utilities, modifying river channels, and irrigating lands; in iron mines and foundaries; as farm labor; or any other useful employment. The same act provided for the establishment of the Board of Public Labor. It was to be made up of the governor, the secretary of state, the state comptroller, the attorney general, and the state treasurer. It was the duty of the Board to make contracts with corporations, partnerships, or individuals for the use of convict labor. The rules and regulations by which the gangs worked were established by the Board. The security measures were the same as if the convicts were behind the walls; that is, the state furnished all the guards.

During the next 5 years every possible effort was made by the Board of Public Labor to return the penitentiary to the position of a respectable institution. Not the least of their efforts was to create a situation profitable to the state and tolerable for the convicts. With less than 20 years of organized prison management to its credit and with state administrators changing every 2 years, a profitable prison operation had not yet been attained. After trying many forms of prison government and various types of management, the policy of using a state agent as superintendent of the penitentiary was discarded. In 1871 the legislature passed a law requiring the governor to lease the penitentiary to private individuals. He was required to advertise for bids and to lease it to the highest bidder. The first man to lease the penitentiary was A. J. Cunningham. Under the terms of the lease, the state was to receive \$3 per month per convict.

As the prison population continued to increase, the contractors began to sublease convicts to planters, tanners, bricklayers, and as rail work crews, which resulted in many abuses. These abuses began to appear with the inmates having poor clothing and no shoes in winter and with escapes rising from 50 in 1871 to 382 in 1876 due to these conditions — with no effective system of recapturing them. (Consult Table 1 for deaths and escapes during this era.)

When an investigating committee made its report, the legislature empowered and directed the governor to take immediate steps to terminate the lease of the penitentiary. He was instructed to make whatever financial arrangements that proved to be fair and equitable with A. J. Ward, E. C. Dewy, and Nathan Patton who held the lease at the time. The state was to take no machinery or supplies from the lessees unless in settlement of accrued debts by lessees to the state. The legislature appropriated \$5,000 with which to settle any accounts due the lessee if the need should arise.

**TABLE 1**  
**ESCAPES AND DEATHS 1865 - 1894**

Year	Total Inmate Population	Escapes	Deaths	Period
1865	165	0	3	Board of Labor (1866- 1871)
1866	134	3	6	
1867	356	26	16	
1868	420	14	7	
1869	430	22	10	
1870	503	37	8	First Lease (1872- 1876)
1871	520	50	24	
1872	752	48	41	
1873	937	54	50	
1874	1161	117	64	
1875	1471	275	101	Second Lease (1877- 1883)
1876	1702	382	62	
1877	1559	282	97	
1878	1564	240	106	
1879	1708	197	103	
1880	1972	176	112	Contract- Lease (1884- 1909)
1881	2201	204	108	
1882	2117	185	99	
1883	2301	149	105	
1884	2450	105	98	
1885	2689	156	94	
1886	2783	70	128	
1887	2926	61	97	
1888	3178	63	116	
1889	3360	67	97	
1890	3346	88	84	
1891	3204	44	52	
1892	3402	79	54	
1893	3633	89	74	
1894	3937	70	61	

In the event no satisfactory arrangement could be made either the said lessees or the state could bring suit in the district court of Travis County for enforcement and adjustment of any right or claim or recovery of any balances between the said lessees. In no event, however, was the state to assume any court costs by either party. In spite of all the findings and activities of the committee and the recommendations of the governor, the lease was not completely terminated until 1883, under a new administration and a later investigating committee. In May 1883, public opinion again raised its vociferous voice and created so much hostility toward the plan that the legislature was virtually forced to abolish the lease system. The State of Texas was sued by A. J. Cunningham for revoking his lease with the penitentiary. After considerable time in courts, he was awarded \$40,000 in damages in 1885.

The new plan adopted in 1883 was the contract-lease system. It was considered to be a better plan than the old lease plan, but it, too, proved far from satisfactory. Under the new plan the state retained control of the penitentiary and the convicts, but leased to private operators the shops within the penitentiary walls. The superintendent was also authorized to hire out chain gangs of convicts for construction purposes to railroads, public utilities, and others. However, the Huntsville Industries were not successful. Competitors charged that their products were inferior and a systematic boycott spelled their doom.

In 1884 a financial agent was appointed to run the penitentiary in place of the prison board that had ruled during the lease period. When the financial agent became head of the prison system, the state began to buy farm lands and also to experiment with the production of iron ore. The experiment proved that iron ore from East Texas could be used profitably in the manufacture of cast iron pipe. For this purpose the state purchased a farm at Rusk, which became a temporary success.

The best way to present the conditions under which the leased labor gangs were forced to operate comes to us in the form of a 1909 investigating committee report. C. B. Hudspeth, who wrote the dissenting opinion section of the report, gives a graphic description of the existing conditions under the contract lease system:

First - After witnessing with my own eyes accounts of brutality and hearing with my own ears tales of atrocious and brutal treatment at the hands of certain sergeants within the penitentiary system of this State upon convicts entrusted to their care, I cannot find it in my heart to endorse the use of an instrument by which death has been inflicted upon human beings; neither can I endorse a modification of the punishment by the strap or a bat, believing that the same should be totally abolished . . . . In making this minority report, I do not wish to convey the idea to the people of Texas that there are not some humane officers connected with this system. I have the highest regard for the Superintendent, . . . and for the Assistant Superintendent at Huntsville and others . . . . Many of the instances of brutality and abuse existing in the system these men, I believe, would remedy same if they could, but their hands are tied . . . . I trust that this report will sufficiently arouse the people of Texas . . . to such an extent that the people will rise up and demand a Called Session of the Legislature of the State in order that legislation may be enacted whereby this organized hell and "Black



Hole of Calcutta" will be in the course of a few months only a ghostly memory in the minds of the people....

.....  
Fourth - Nowhere in our findings is there any report made on the State Railroad camp. I believe that the people of Texas should know something regarding this .... The evidence will show that the brutality of the guards and sergeants in this camp exceeded that of any other camp visited by this committee; that the convicts were poorly fed, half clothed, and that they were driven to their work with the lash, like galley slaves, from early dawn until the sombre shadows of evening put an end to their sufferings and gave them relief from the bull-whip. From a preponderance of evidence before this committee, I believe that every spike upon this road was driven in human blood and every tie and rail was put there at the barter of the bones and muscle of these poor unfortunates by men in high power in this great commonwealth.

I state my conviction in closing this report that our whole penitentiary system needs reform; that legislation is needed to make reform; that barbarous treatment of convicts in our penitentiaries and convict farms is changed. Humane supervision can only be secured through humane agents, carefully selected and well paid by the State. They should be in daily touch with the convicts and those who work for them, and have no connection with financial management. They shall have full authority to prescribe and enforce regulations to promote the health of convicts, to regulate and prescribe punishment when needed, and to protect them against brutality of guards, sergeants, and contractors.

The use of the lash should be prohibited by law, and severe punishment inflicted on those who may violate it ... The great object of reforming criminals is defeated whenever the State turns them over to any class of men who seek money through the labor and groans of human beings. Avarice and cupidity never inspire humanity, and it matters not whether a convict is worked by the State or by individuals, the great object of reform will be forgotten whenever the chief object is to make money out of men's bones and muscles.... I say that men are never reformed that way, but go forth to curse the inhumanity of the State and become worse men.

Discipline is necessary, but discipline and punishment may exist without the barbarity that now disgraces our reformatory and penal system....

Without additional law, the Governor is powerless. He cannot inspect, for his duties confine him to his office. We do not doubt that he thought he had secured the best officers obtainable; the vice is in the system under which barbarity can be practiced with impunity

There is no remedy without a revision of the whole system ... I respectfully recommend that the Governor of Texas call a Special Session of the Legislature as soon as possible that remedial legislation be had.

## RISE OF AN AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM

During the late 1800's, the growing unpopularity of the lease system led the prison administrators to investigate the concept of state-owned farms. The first farm purchased was the Harlem Farm. It consisted of 2,500 acres in Fort Bend County, and the purchase price was \$25,000 in 1885.

Harlem Farm (renamed Jester Unit in 1967) was the first link of a long chain of Texas prison farms; however it was not without its problems during those earlier years. The vast majority of the convicts were not from farms in the "outside world;" consequently, they had no knowledge of farming and cared less about learning it at the expense of the state of Texas. Furthermore, the overseers were not trained farmers so it was a hit or miss system with little respect for cost, and even less interest in operating a farm in a manner that would reduce the penal cost to Texas taxpayers. It was, then, merely a way of keeping convicts busy as a form of punishment. The increased convict population, however, caused the state to increase the size of the Harlem Farm to 5,657 acres of farm land and also to establish a brick plant to produce all the brick for the penitentiary.

By 1910 Texas had developed into an agricultural state with a population of almost 4 million citizens. The penitentiary, following the trend of the times, had itself branched out into agriculture.

As the physical needs of the state penitentiary system continued to grow, more land was needed to provide a place of labor for the growing convict population.

By 1910 the following farms had been added to the growing agricultural system of the penitentiary: In December 1899, a 1,511-acre farm 2 miles north of Huntsville known as the Wynne plantation and which later became the Wynne Unit was added to the system, enhancing both the efficiency and the agricultural production of the penitentiary. The Clemens Farm at Brazoria, acquired in 1901, added a total of 8,116 acres of fertile land. Another farm of 16,157 acres was acquired in Brazoria County for the purpose of growing grain crops and livestock. This farm later became the site of the prison saw mill and a grain dryer and dehydrator. Two units were built on this 16,157 acres; they were Ramsey Unit I and Ramsey Unit II. The Imperial State Farm (now named Central Unit) situated in Fort Ber<sup>1</sup> County added 5,235 acres, 4,200 acres of which were in a high state of cultivation.

Thus, the system was well on its way toward becoming a vast agricultural empire which would later include 12 farm units. As to be expected, however, the only easy factor in the rapid growth of the penitentiary was the ease with which the convict population grew. Each term of a district court held in Texas seemed to produce a "chain" of convicts in excess of the number of convicts begin discharged or released on parole.

In 1909 the Goree Unit was established on a 978-acre tract of land which the penitentiary owned 4 miles south of Huntsville. This tract of land was used to supply cordwood which the system needed for various purposes. The wood was transported into town on a small-gauge railroad which was built for this purpose only. The Goree Unit was to be the women's unit of the Texas penitentiary system. Until this time the few women who came to prison had been contracted to the Bowden plantation about 12 miles from Huntsville.

The contract lease system came to an end as the result of a legislative investigation in 1909. The committee presented to the legislature a long list of reforms, most of which were embodied in the act approved September 17, 1910. This statute forbade the practice of leasing, and created a prison commission of three full-time men who were entrusted with control of the penitentiary. They had the authority to fill all prison positions, make all rules, and receive and distribute funds with the aid of a new auditor.

When the new prison commission took over the Texas prison system, the system owned many different and scattered properties valued at \$4,500,000. The new commission began a system of paroling convicts to employers, with apparent success at first. Another innovation was the establishing of an Office of Criminal Records. Several full-time physicians and dentists were added to the staff. Most shops were modernized and farming began on a large scale. Another reform attempted in this period was the use of "good time" allowances, whereby an inmate could earn a reduction of his sentence by adhering to all the rules and regulations of the prison.

With respect to finances the penitentiary seemed the most hopeless of all state institutions. The short railroad owned by the penitentiary system was worse than unprofitable; frost at Thanksgiving in 1912 ruined the \$300,000 cane crop; a fire in the main unit at Huntsville destroyed several buildings, including everything connected with the educational system, with a value of \$285,000. Then the unit at Rusk, after losing \$700,000 on its iron venture, burned, losing another \$50,000 in state property. Recognizing the desperate condition of the prison system, the legislature in 1913 authorized the penitentiary commission to issue bonds in the amount of \$2 million to pay debts, make repairs, and add certain improvements.

The first attempt made by the State of Texas to improve the convicts through education was an act passed February 13, 1875 authorizing the establishment of a prison library and appropriating \$500 to be used to purchase books and other publications.

In 1895 the first system of convict education was authorized by the legislature. This act merely gave the management of the penitentiary the authority to institute a system of educational improvements for the convicts, but with no appropriation of funds for educational supplies or staff. Therefore, the responsibility for the development of a system of education was promptly delegated to the chaplain. However, little progress was made in this movement until 1911. Although the state Department of Education donated books, and the chaplain drafted some convicts to assist in teaching, the progress was slow. In 1911, at the request of the convicts, a welfare fund was started for the benefit of the education activities. The fund was to be derived from the sale of articles made by the convicts and sold to the visitors to the penitentiary. The system was limited largely to the Huntsville Unit. The illiterates received high priority as the first pupils of the primary grades. It was in that same year that an act of the Texas Legislature provided for a system of academic and industrial education in the penitentiary that required all illiterates to attend school. After the acquisition of a limited supply of materials and the assembly of some additional staff members, classes opened with 68 convicts. The school seemed to be making some progress until the cane crop was ready to harvest. Then all available men were removed to the farms

until the crops were harvested. When the school reopened in December of the same year, only 20 convicts were in attendance. The big step had been taken, however, because classes were meeting again and the welfare fund was in operation.

In spite of the fact that many investigating committees and reorganization commissions had functioned repeatedly, the vexing problem of the penitentiary was still number one of all the state institutions. Sanitation, treatment of convicts, food, clothing, and discipline were all problems which constantly attracted the attention of many Texans. The following excerpts are taken from the book, **Hell in a Texas Pen**. The experiences were written by ex-convicts in an attempt to facilitate the reform in the penitentiary.

I helped dig twenty-six graves while I was in the pen, and only three of the men died from natural causes; the others were beaten to death or run over and killed or died from wading and working in the water. When anyone did die they would write their people and state that they died of heart trouble or consumption.

Every time a convict would do any little thing to displease the guard, they would make him ride a pole stark naked all night. By riding the pole it means sitting astride of a pole made of three 2 x 6 timbers nailed together, the sharpened corners up. Sometimes they put you in a dark cell all night, where you sleep on a cement floor stark naked, without a blanket, no matter how cold the weather is. They sprinkle sugar on the floor, so the ants will gather there to keep you awake so you cannot rest.

When I went into the pen I weighed 176 pounds and was in good health. While I was being worked to death and bleeding like a stuck hog, I went down to 96 pounds.

Whenever you met a guard or Captain and failed to take your hat off to them they would shoot it off.

The day I was released was the first day I'd had a square meal in two years. All I had to eat down there was half-done beans for dinner, without any seasoning; for supper the soup left over from the beans at dinner with cornbread and old sour syrup. For breakfast we got oatmeal and rice without any sugar and three biscuits, so hard it was hard work to eat them.

At one time they sent some of us to a farm three miles out. There was one boy who had a very sore leg. He asked if he might walk slower, the Captain stomped the poor boy so hard one of his ribs was broken and made him go on to the field. An hour later, the Captain whipped him until his back bled because he could not hold up his end of the work. He told the boy that if he was sick, to die and prove it.

The first nine decades in the history of the state penitentiary system revealed very little in the way of a prison program of which any state could be proud.

In 1925 the conditions of the prison system became increasingly poor, the system owed \$700,000, and the prison population had increased 35 percent over a 2-year period. A committee was set up to inspect the system and make recommendations. The legislature adjourned before the investigating committee could make its report.

The legislature in its next meeting abolished the three-man commission in favor of a Board of Prison Commissioners. The first act of the new board was to name Colonel R. W.

Mead to the prison managership, where he served until March 1928, at which time the board appointed W. H. Mead. The new manager served for almost 2 years during which he conducted an agriculture program. There was a need for a more forward looking manager, and Lee Simmons was named the new manager in 1930.

Under Lee Simmons drastic changes in the physical setup at the Huntsville Unit were made: the cell blocks were fitted with steam heating; running water was piped to individual cells; in 1930 the shoe factory was remodeled, enabling the prison system to furnish the state institutions with shoes; and in 1931 a modern print shop was equipped to handle all the prison printing. In the same year a woodyard was set up to supply fuel for the prison power plant, excess wood being sold in Walker County for a profit.

The Simmons administration saw the inauguration of a building program which revolutionized the physical setup of the other prison units. A complete new unit was built at Sugar Land on Central (formerly Imperial State Farm) where a modern concrete administration building, dormitory, and a canning and packing plant were constructed. In 1935 a brick plant was erected at Harlem Farm (now named Jester Unit).

During this period the Texas Prison System's population had been increasing, and the number of escapes decreasing from a record average of 12 percent of the convict population in 1929 to 3 percent in 1935. The prisoner population in the same period increased from 4,868 to 5,623, an increase of almost 800 inmates in 7 years.

Following Lee Simmons' resignation in 1935, David Nelson of Orange, Texas was appointed general manager. He died after being in office for only 2 weeks. On November 18, 1935, O.J.S. Ellingson became the new general manager. Under Ellingson, construction was carried on until the building program was almost completed. D. W. Stakes became general manager in October 1941. In 1941, academic education was augmented by a vocational training department where inmates were taught the theoretical side of trades during the working hours.

The prison rodeo inaugurated in 1931 by Lee Simmons was perfected until it became a national attraction. Money derived from the sale of tickets supported welfare activities of the prison.

On March 1, 1936 a bureau of classification was established as a research project. The purpose of the project was to create an adequate classification procedure for the Texas Prison System. The experiment covered a time span from March 1, 1936 to August 13, 1937 and funds were provided by grants from the Lora Spelman Rockefeller Foundation and by state funding. The experimental system developed at this time was later adopted by the Texas Prison Board, who appointed Dr. W. E. Gettys, Director of the Bureau of Research in Social Sciences at the University of Texas, as the first director of classification.

## THE DEGENERATION OF THE PRISON SYSTEM

The period from 1937 to 1948 was a period of backsliding for the Texas Prison System. The inmate population kept increasing but the productivity of the farms remained about the same. The conditions existing at the Huntsville Unit were a disgrace to the state. The system was permeated with brutality, self-mutilation, sex perversions, incompetency, and petty graft. The prison system of Texas was truly in a state of decay.

In the main unit at Huntsville, living quarters were overcrowded and run-down. Parts of the buildings were falling apart; the floors were rotting away, and in places only the bare dirt floor remained. The yards were littered with junk, rusted machinery, and rotting lumber. There were poor sewage accommodations, or none, and practically no fire protection. Most of the prisoners in the cell blocks were sleeping on the floor, in the aisle, or anywhere there was room for a blanket on the concrete floor.

The shop, where trainees were learning a trade, was poorly lighted and improperly heated, with part of the building having no floors.

There seemed to be not enough work for the prison population. The mattress factory, which had the responsibility of producing bedding for the prison system, had only two men working within its walls during December 1947, while prisoners were sleeping on concrete floors with only a blanket as protection against the cold.

In 1947 the shoe shop was idle because it was found that buying army surplus shoes was cheaper than making them. The only shoes made were those requiring special sizes. These conditions were also present in the print shop and the textile mill, thus making idle hundreds of inmates who could have been put to work productively without creating new jobs.

There was only one industry in the prison that was on full production — the license plate plant. The plant manufactured all vehicle license plates for the state. At that time the plant was operating on a day-and-night basis.

The license plate plant was the main attraction of the prison, a place where for 25 cents visitors could have the guided tour behind the walls of the Texas Prison System. The guide would point to the plant and say, "Now here is where we teach the men a useful trade." The officials and guides showed the visitors only what they wanted to see: a well-lighted plant, a few spotless cells, kitchens serving hot food to the convicts. The tour was not complete, however, without everyone's having the opportunity of sitting in the electric chair and hearing the words of his guide: "...Now here is where Raymond Hamilton died ...."

The citizens did not want to see the poor conditions but just what they were shown. There were 1,500 inmates at the Huntsville Unit, which was built for only 1,200. Because of the influx of prisoners, cells and dormitories were filled to overflowing. To handle the new arrivals, those in quarantine, it had been necessary to jam double-deck beds into the narrow passageway surrounding the cell blocks in the main wing.

In order to provide toilet facilities for these men, a cell in each block had to be left vacant, thereby cutting down the number of cells available, and leaving a single toilet for 20 to 40 men.

The trusty dormitories were jam-packed with bunks. They contained 2,500 square feet of space, housing from 100 to 150 men, allowing 16 to 25 square feet of floor space per man including toilet, washing, recreational, and passage space. The crowded conditions during the night allowed sex perversion because there were no guards available to check upon these conditions.

The accommodations for the guards were worse than for the prisoners. In 1947 only four of the system's units had dormitories for guards, with the remaining units having sleeping quarters in the prison proper. In a room used by 40 guards there were only two chairs, both broken. At night the men had to throw their clothing on the floor under their cots because there was no other place to put them. One toilet and lavatory served 40 men. They had to walk past two cell blocks to take a shower. To make matters worse, in many cases the housing that was available was of the wrong type.

Conditions on the farms were worse than at the main unit, if this were possible. The convicts lived in tanks or open dormitories designed for 40 men but occupied by 60 to 80 men. The heating was inadequate and the tanks were cold and damp with a shortage of blankets and clothing. Men slept in the same clothing that they wore every day in the fields. The bunks were jammed together with little room left between them for the men to move about.

The weaker convicts were forced to submit to the will of the stronger, and the moral level was somewhat low. A statement made by a 17-year-old inmate, after being treated by the prison hospital for rectal gonorrhea, gives insight into things that transpire in those conditions:

The day I got to the farm the Warden looked at me and said, "Number Two Wing." That is all the Warden said to me until the doctor transferred me out. When I walked into Number Two Wing, a convict who was about twenty-five years old named Billy the Kid walked over and told me, "As long as you stay in this wing, I will take care of you." I did not know what he meant at first, but I later found out. The first night he came to my bunk before the lights went out and bragged about the fights he had had, and showed me his weapon. It was a piece of lead and was rolled to fit the inside of his hand. He carried it in his pocket all the time. About two weeks later after the Kid had been playing with me, he came to my bunk one night after lights were out and said, "Let's go," and just walked away. I didn't go with him and when he looked up I noticed that the Kid and the building tender had exchanged bunks and the bunk had a sheet draped over it like a tent. The Kid came back and cursed me, hit me in the back with his fist, and told me he meant business. I followed him because I was afraid of what he might do. That night he committed an act of sodomy on me and from that night on I was known as "Billy's Punk."

Billy's record indicates that he had transferred the venereal "bug" to the 17-year-old youth. He had received a series of 62 shock treatments in the prison hospital, after being diagnosed by the prison psychiatrist as "psychotic" with strong sadistic tendencies.

On most units the toilets were located at one end of the tank near the open shower. There

were four sinks lined up against the wall. At almost any time the overflow from the toilets and showers could be observed on the concrete floors.

There were no laundry facilities of any type, making it necessary for inmates who wanted to clean their clothes to wash them in facilities provided for other purposes. If he could not wash his clothing, the inmate slept and worked in them until they rotted from his body. After a tour of inspection, a prison board member remarked:

I found men who had been wearing the same clothing for five weeks. They had to sleep in their clothing because of a blanket shortage, and the heating facilities were such that the tanks were damp and cold at night. I tugged the sleeve of one of the convicts and his shirt tore into shreds in my fingers.

The odor of wet, decaying wood, unwashed bodies, and dirty clothing never left the tanks. Maintenance of the building was poor, and it was not unusual for all the windows of the tanks to have been smashed out. The convicts said the guards shot them out; the guards said the convicts kicked them out. In an article in the **Houston Chronicle** conditions were described on two farms:

At Darrington farm where most prisoners under 25 who have been to the penitentiary once or more are kept, the 333 inmates live in tanks that were designed for 250 inmates, they are sleeping in double deck bunks so close together it is hard to see how they can get enough fresh air.

And the stench is awful for they get soap enough for only one fourth of the men in the tanks to get a soap and water bath every three weeks, and at this farm there is no provision for the prisoners to wash their clothing in. In rainy weather the prisoners are unable to wash their own clothing, even in plain water.

At Retrieve farm inmates are so crowded they actually sleep on the floor. I. K. Kelly, Warden of the farm, said the unit was designed to take care of 350 men, and the population of the farm is currently 475. More than 100 men are assigned to sleep on double decker bunks jammed one against the other. In one tank 31 prisoners are sleeping on the brick floor.

On the farms convicts did field work for the most part. This work was not the most desirable, but when convicts had to walk 2 to 5 miles to work, three times daily, any desire to work they might have had was gone. This made it difficult for the farm wardens to get men out of the tanks into the fields. One warden said, "I considered it a good day if I got more than half of my men to work."

Except for the poor conditions on the farms and in the tanks, the food probably caused more unrest and disciplinary problems than any other thing. The dining halls were equipped to feed all the inmates at one time. The prisoners ate cafeteria style by carrying their trays along a food table where food was placed upon their trays.

The inmates felt that it was not expecting too much to receive a well-balanced diet of food, prepared in such a way as to be edible. This was not the case; there were weevils in the bread, sand in the turnips, worms in the meat and beans. On one farm the biscuits were described as being "too hard to break with your hands, let alone bite into." The explanation of the steward was that there had been no shortening and baking powder for several weeks.



Food strikes, or "bucks" as they were called in the Texas Prison System, were common. Men refused to go to dining halls, preferring to eat the only other food available — raw vegetables and roots found in the fields. Hunger usually broke the strike. One report by the members of the Prison Board stated that:

We saw 175 pounds of meat allotted to feed an entire camp for eight meals. We saw biscuits too hard for a human to eat. We, the Board members, want the men fed with food they can eat. If we rob these men who are doing time in prison for their crimes against Texas ... then we are worse criminals than they are. We can't expect men to work and live on the food we saw on the farms.

By contrast, some farms were eating a balanced diet prepared in a satisfactory manner. It was the warden of the farm who selected the food to be fed to the inmates and gave orders for its preparation. A warden who believed in feeding his men had the means to do so, while a warden who was not interested in the inmates' eating problems allowed his men to eat poorly.

Over 4,000 inmates were assigned to the farms, with little hope that conditions would improve. Physical conditions were deplorable, and what facilities were available were inadequate. The records indicate that the greatest inadequacy appeared in the prison personnel. No one seemed to care what transpired behind the walls and fences. If anyone cared, he did not express to the legislature the need for increase in salaries of guards and other personnel.

In 1947 prison guards were earning as little as \$105 per month and as much as \$120 per month. The state got what it paid for. There are indications that in 1947 more unrest was caused by the sadism, brutality, and general poor treatment rendered by the guards than by any other single factor. An article appearing in the **Dallas Times Herald** tells of instances of poor judgment by guards:

I stood beside a double deck bunk in a Darrington "tank," a common dormitory housing 60 men, and talked with a youngster who had been struck by a .38 caliber slug fired into the tank by a guard to frighten another prisoner who had been calling him a dirty name.

The wall at Darrington was pock marked from pistol fire and there were holes in the windows where buckshot had been fired by guards outside ....

In 1947, records show, 87 inmates cut their heel tendons in acts of self-mutilation. There were in that year 128 escapes, and 75 inmates who "bugged" themselves, that is, mutilated themselves in various ways. There were escape attempts, inmate suicides, inmates killed by guards, and five inmates killed by inmates. In that year, 50 inmates were punished for sex perversion.

There is no record indicating that an inmate injured himself or escaped because of worms in the beans or lack of soap. No convict told investigators that he cut himself so that he could avoid sleeping in a damp, cold, overcrowded tank which was literally run by the convicts themselves; but there were many convicts who stated that they cut themselves "because the guard so-and-so would put his pistol in my face and say, 'Work you son-of-a-whore or I'll kill you'." This type of verbal treatment seemed to further degrade the inmate by stripping

him of every bit of self respect. This, combined with the gloomy conditions in which he lived, caused the inmate to rebel.

Seldom did the convict "buck" or strike against poor physical conditions, but there were times when he bucked and blamed an official of the prison, in the hope that the official being blamed would be fired. An employee once stated that, "They cut themselves to get somebody fired, and when they failed they stopped cutting."

A member of the Prison Board, upon investigating, evidently found a different situation. One Board member told of walking into a tank on Darrington Farm and finding a 20-year-old convict who had been shot through the ankle.

The boy was still in a state of shock. He held his foot out and it was broken and bloody. A guard had fired his pistol into the tank for no reason at all and this boy's foot happened to get in the way. When I raised hell enough, the farm captain ordered first aid and they wrapped a piece of gauze around the foot. The medicine chest was empty, and there was no doctor there, and no one had bothered to send for one.

It is important to point out during the years preceding and including 1947, the popular theory for self-mutilation was the hope of the inmate that he would be transferred to the Walls, or the sanctuary of the hospital. In most cases the ruse did not work, and the convict remained upon the unit where the mutilation occurred.

This is what the Texas Prison System looked like in 1947: overcrowded living areas, convict unrest, extensive sexual perversion, brutal guards, and food unfit for human consumption. Some of the prison units in 1947 could easily have been called model units with good living conditions and some of the units could have just as easily been called hell. This contrast led one reporter to write:

Today in 1947, the Texas Prison System is contrast and contradiction. It runs from very good to very bad. Some of the units can rightfully be called "model" while some are a disgrace to a society that considers itself civilized. Some inmates' living quarters are almost homelike while others would vie with the Nazi concentration camps for their filth and inhumanity. Some shops are humming with activity and the men running the machines know they are learning something of value and that is reflected in their eyes and their morals; while other shops are idle and have been unused for months and the men stay penned up day in and day out like cattle.

Some of the prison personnel are sincere, honest men and women who strive to do the best they can with the materials and equipment they have at hand; others are as low, if not lower than the hardened criminals they are hired to guard.

Stories of hunger strikes, favoritism to inmates, trigger-happy and brutal guards, prisoners who chop off their fingers or cut their heel tendons to attain the sanctuary of the hospital, internal strife among the administrative personnel, all of these should be fresh in the public mind. So are the refutations of these charges by officials, reports of a rehabilitation program and the Huntsville rodeo where everyone appears to be just one big happy family.

Those who have made conducted tours and who have seen spotless cells, the

busy inmates in the shops included in the tour, the bright mess hall and have sampled the food in the "Walls" have wondered why the system can possibly have any critics.

Others, far fewer in number, who have seen and smelled the tanks of the prison farms, the filth, and idleness and hopelessness of life behind bars and who have seen the stubs of hands and limbs of men who have maimed themselves, may wonder why the system can possibly have any supporters.

Like the paradox which is the Texas Prison System itself, the truth lies with both the critics and the defenders and the whole truth is not with one but with both.

In 1947 the nine-man governor-appointed Prison Board met in a small East Texas town. Their intent was to "do something besides talk about the situation." As a result of this meeting the general manager was asked to resign and Governor Beauford H. Jester had to replace three board members who walked out with the general manager. The following morning in a news release the Governor stated:

Thursday, November 27, 1947, a nine-man Prison Board, meeting in harmony and united action, appointed a nationally known penologist, O. B. Ellis of the Shelby County Tennessee Penal Farm, as General Manager of the Texas prison system. To Texans the action comes as heartening news, for far too long the Texas Prison System with its inadequate facilities, mediocre management, brutality and inability to accomplish rehabilitation of offenders has been a discredit to Texas. And, with a Board torn by diverse purposes and dissention, there has been in the past but little hope for corrections of the situations and improvement to the prison system.

## THE ADMINISTRATION OF O. B. ELLIS

In 1947 O. B. Ellis was relatively unknown in the field of correctional work. He had been a shoe salesman, teacher, minor county official, and finally the manager of the county penal farm in Shelby County, Tennessee. His record in Shelby County was impressive. He had built a model unit out of one of the poorest in the state. He had few escapes, no mutilations, and little or no political interference in his administration.

Though he had not established himself as a penologist, he possessed certain qualities that made him ideal for the new position he was to take. He was recognized as an expert in livestock and as a successful land conservationist. His record also indicated he was humane toward the inmates in his charge. Further, he had a record of being a firm but fair disciplinarian. All of these qualities were needed in the Texas Prison System.

The Texas Prison Board traveled to Memphis to consult with Mr. Ellis about the possibility of his becoming the general manager of the Texas Prison System. After the meeting, Mr. Ellis was offered the position, and he accepted it as he said, "The job I accept as a challenge to my ability and to the pride of Texas."

Financially speaking, the prison was deeply in debt. Even though it had at its disposal the free labor of 5,700 inmates, and the use of 73,000 acres of soil, the prison did not produce enough food to feed the inmates properly. Some of the finest grazing land in the state was located on prison units in the Gulf Coast Plains, but the prison was buying beef on the open market at a rate of almost one-half million dollars yearly to feed the inmate population.

In 1947 the Texas Prison System had 1,400 mules and fewer than 20 mechanized farming implements. Less than 20,000 acres of the total 73,000 acres were being farmed and used as pasture.

Those were the conditions which existed when O. B. Ellis became manager of the Texas Prison System on January 1, 1948. The prison system needed help in terms of money, support, and time.

The prison itself was in a state of turmoil the first week of the new administration. The head steward reported that there was enough food to last only 90 days and there was no money to buy any more. With 9 months remaining in the fiscal year, the budget for food was already half gone so an appeal was made to the state for money to feed the inmates until the new program had time to become effective. The result was that Governor Beauford H. Jester, in an unprecedented move, arranged for the transfer of \$179,000 from the State Highway Department to help relieve the approaching crisis in the prison's food supply.

Farm wardens were complaining that the prisoners refused to work because they were sick and could not get medical attention. Mr. Ellis arranged for each inmate to receive a physical examination, and when he learned that most of the men were only malingering, he made his famous "no work - no eat" statement to the inmates. The inmates, faced with the prospect of not receiving three meals a day, started to work. Men who had picked 60 to 70 pounds of cotton daily now picked 300 pounds a day of what was the first cotton crop under the Ellis plan.

With the aid of the Prison Board members and with the cooperation of Texas newspapers,

Mr. Ellis put his five-point program before the people of Texas. The objectives of the program were:

1. Establishment of a sensible rehabilitation program
2. Improvement of housing and living conditions for inmates
3. Improvement of living conditions and an increase in salaries for guards
4. Modernization of the vast agricultural operations
5. Modification of legislation so the prison could operate profitably

The reporters of the Texas papers boosted the new program to the utmost. Every incident inside the prison and every appeal for funds from the taxpayers was reported to the newspapers. Thus, the prison administration gained the reputation of being fair and honest with reporters. Also during this critical period, the Prison Board members made speeches throughout the state. The needs of the prison and the type of employees required for an efficient institution were discussed with groups in town meetings and with civic organizations all over the state. Citizens who never once considered the prison as a responsibility of the free population received firsthand information of the conditions which had been prevalent for many years.

In 1948, the prison administration made recommendations for extensive improvements and asked for funds totaling \$4,176,075 exclusive of increases in salaries. The amount asked for was admittedly a lot of money, but it was pointed out that the prison system was spending almost as much every 2 years for operation expenses. The prison administration predicted that when this capital investment was combined with prison-made equipment and prison labor, it would produce assets valued at \$8 million.

Actually the estimate proved modest. It was revealed in a report dated March 1953 to a group of State senators that the appropriation had resulted in facilities valued at \$10 million, which was far better than 200 percent on the original investment.

Armed with their blueprint, prison administrators and members of the Prison Board took their program to the people. Their campaign succeeded, and in 1949 the legislature gave the prison system the amount the prison administration estimated was needed immediately.

One of the first steps in reforming the prison system was to modernize the farming, which in 1947 was still being done with mules and Georgia stock plows with no heavy equipment. On the pastureland owned by the Texas Prison System, not enough hogs and cattle were being raised to furnish the meat required to feed the prisoners. There was no attempt to grow vegetables for the kitchen and canning.

The first step in the new program of modernization was to secure the services of well-trained men as directors in charge of agriculture, supervisors of livestock, horticulturists, truck farm managers, and tractor supervisors, all of whom were well qualified to oversee the fields they were chosen to direct. Most of the men were graduates of Texas A & M University.

The land owned by the prison system was located in an area where the climate and the soil were suitable for good gardening and under the horticulturists there was an expansion of the production of edible crops. Fresh vegetables were furnished to all kitchens throughout the system at all times during the year. The surplus was canned in a modern canning

factory, allowing the inmate to choose from among 8 to 10 vegetables. By 1951 the prison was raising all the vegetables consumed and selling \$60,000 worth to other state institutions. In 1960 the prison had over 5,000 more inmates than in 1948, and produced a vegetable surplus which was sold to other state institutions for \$73,168.

At the beginning of 1948 there were 5,606 head of poor cattle. A program of careful culling and the purchase of good breeding cattle by the prison system resulted in a total herd of 10,288 head of improved cattle by 1951. The swine population was increased from 1,937 in 1948 to 15,063 in 1960 and quality was improved at the same time. This allowed the Texas Prison System to produce its own meat and allowed the inmate to eat more meat per person than the average person in the "free world."

A vast pasture drainage program on a cooperative basis was accomplished at Ramsey Farm. New land was cleared, drained, and put into production either as pastureland or cropland. Within 3 years, by 1951, over 10,000 acres of additional land had been put into production.

Another improvement over the old system was a crop diversification program which involved the growing of soil-building crops. An alfalfa and grass dehydration plant was installed at Central Unit in a new building which was constructed of salvaged materials from an antiquated structure at Huntsville. In 1951, 35 acres of alfalfa were planted at Ramsey Farm and the following year an additional 200 acres were planted.

Before the pasture improvement program began, the prison farm pastures were overstocked; after the program was instituted, the number of cattle and swine were more than doubled with no overstocking problem occurring. Much land was seeded to permanent pasture with white dutch clover, dallas grass, and coastal bermuda. In addition to permanent pasture temporary winter pasture was developed with oats and hubam clover.

During the hot, humid summer of 1951 the prison system planned to produce another 10,000 bales of cotton. The cotton crop, having matured prematurely and suddenly, was ready to be picked when a hurricane appeared over the Gulf of Mexico. Weather forecasters reported that the hurricane would strike near Galveston in an area where seven of the prison farm units were located. Wardens on the farm units notified the General Manager that the crop would be lost unless they got help immediately. The only unit where available help was not already involved in the agricultural programs was at the Huntsville Unit where at that time inmates were working in various prison industries. General Manager Ellis presented the problem to the inmates in a mass meeting in the Huntsville Unit auditorium. In a move unprecedented in Texas penology, the General Manager asked for volunteers to go out and pick cotton.

The 1,500 inmates in the auditorium agreed to help get the cotton picked. The cotton crop was saved. This cooperative effort demonstrated that the new program was giving the inmate a sense of responsibility that had never before been exhibited in the Texas Prison System.

The building program which was begun during the latter part of 1947 was stepped up until the program began to operate at capacity. A new building designed for 760 inmates was built at Ramsey; prisoners could then be housed in cells rather than tanks. There were

also improvements made in the culinary, hospital, educational, and recreational facilities. New cells were constructed at the Huntsville Unit, a 400-man unit was constructed at Wynne Farm, and 136 cells for the women were built at Goree. The women were housed in individual cells, which were the first private quarters the women had ever had; and, unlike the men, they were allowed to hang long draw curtains behind the bars for more privacy. These newly constructed cells were the ordinary cells for prisoners except for a few which were used to house the more violent or mentally disturbed.

In 1958 the new modern facility at the Eastham Unit was finished. Men were housed in seven units, each with individual cells for 100 men, plus dormitory space for another 400 inmates. All individual cells had their own plumbing, forced air ventilation, and a radio-speaker with a station selector. Each cell faced a solid wall or windows giving excellent lighting. Bars in the windows double as frames for the small panes of glass, giving the effect of no bars at all.

Money also went into securing repairs at the other units and into building new installations when needed. Construction projects included complete rebuilding of the ice and cold storage plant at Huntsville; complete replacement of the old ice plant at Central Unit; new sewage disposal plants at Central and Wynne; new heating plants at Huntsville, Darrington, and Goree; new wells and water storage tanks at Darrington, Goree, Harlem I and II, Ramsey, Retrieve, and Clemens; cyclone detention fences and pickets at Harlem I & II, Central II, Ramsey, Retrieve, Clemens, and Eastham; and a complete reworking of electrical distribution systems at most units. Additionally, auto and tractor shops, a tin shop, slaughterhouse, shoe shop, garment factory, furniture shop, a carpenter shop, print shop, welding shop, blacksmith shop, canning plant, textile unit, an auto tag plant, and many small items too numerous to mention were built.

To finance prison construction projects, the General Manager asked the legislature to sell prison system crops, primarily cotton, and to keep the profits for use in the building program. This revenue averaged more than \$2 million a year, in contrast to the average amount of less than one-half million dollars a year prior to 1948. The average annual revenue from cotton the 7 years prior to 1948 was \$270,000.

These earnings from productive enterprises made possible the construction of new buildings and the improvement of old ones from prison-earned revenue, which was aptly called "cotton money." Allowing the prison to spend some of this revenue for capital improvements was highly economical because the prison used institution-made brick and tile construction materials and used prison labor in construction. It allowed the state to get more than 2 dollars in value for every tax dollar spent on new buildings.

The Texas Department of Corrections, prison system name adopted in 1957, requested the legislature in 1961 to appropriate money that would enable the Department to continue the building program that was started in 1947. Money was requested for:

1. Smither Unit (Later to become the Ellis Unit) - The legislature appropriated \$1.25 million to buy land for the new unit and \$2 million to start the building program.

2. Goree Cell Block and Administration Building - The Department of Corrections requested \$600,000 in building funds for a new cell block to

house 200 women in individual cells; an adequate administration building; and the conversion and improvement of existing facilities.

3. New Administration Building - The estimated cost of the new building, to be located directly in front of the Walls (Huntsville Unit) and administration building, was \$260,000.

4. Living Units - Four 24-man living units were to be built at Darrington, Harlem I and II - The cost was estimated at \$15,000.

5. Visiting Room at Central II - The cost was estimated at \$15,000.

6. Chapel Auditoriums - Suitable facilities for religious services and for showing films for education and entertainment were to be constructed on each of the two units of Harlem Farm at a cost of \$25,000 each.

7. School and Conference Room - The cost of this construction to be done at the Darrington Unit was estimated at \$35,000.

8. Two 70-man Cell Blocks - The two proposed structures at Clemens and Retrieve would cost a total of \$125,000.

9. Water Wells - Water wells were to be drilled at Central for \$26,000, Harlem I for \$20,000, Harlem II for \$20,000, Ramsey I for \$22,000 and Clemens for \$18,000.

Before 1948 guards were paid a maximum of \$133 per month; in 1960, this figure had increased to a maximum of \$315 and a minimum of \$265 per month. In addition to the increase in salaries, guards had been extended room, board, barber services, and laundry services. In 1947 only four of the system units had dormitories for guards; the remaining units had sleeping quarters in the prison proper, having only bars separating them from the prisoners. In an attempt to relieve this situation, the building of duplexes to house families was begun in the late 1940's. In addition, rental units for married guards ineligible for free housing were completed, and rent was \$20 per unit per month. All were built of brick for maximum durability and ease of maintenance, at a cost of about \$3,000 to \$4,000 each using convict labor and prison-made brick. The increase in salary and better living conditions for employees allowed the Department of Corrections to secure and retain a better quality of employee.

While the building program and the increased salaries for guards solved some of the problems of the prison, there was another area of primary concern in the constant disciplinary problems which arose among the inmates. Suicides, fights, escapes, mutilations, and sex perversion continued. The need for a better method of inmate classification was pressing, and a new system was introduced.

The realization that there was a need for research and statistical data in the implementation and operation of a new program prompted a call to the state college in Huntsville, and a research program was worked out. The director of the department of sociology at the college became the Director of Classification at the prison system. Graduate students and members of the senior classes were used as research assistants in the new project. Personality tests were administered to the Texas prison system inmate population for the first time. Never before had the entire population of the prison system been subject to personality classification.

Classification brought about many changes. The prison administration had for many



years been aware of the need for a psychiatric treatment center for mentally disturbed inmates. This need was fulfilled when a center was opened in 1959 at Wynne Farm. It marked the first time in the history of the Texas Department of Corrections that treatment was available for mentally disturbed inmates. Before, the disturbed were just considered mean and were kept with the other prisoners.

These mentally ill prisoners needed isolation and care. In Wynne they were moved from one cell block to another depending upon their progress and segregated into classifications of disturbed, non-disturbed, and those in a state of remission — schizophrenia.

Treatment of the mentally ill, centered at the Wynne Unit, had the immediate objective of getting the prisoners back to the regular prison units where they could be of functional value to the prison and themselves. Included among the duties of the prison psychiatrist are diagnosis and treatment of mentally ill inmates. In the treatment center at Wynne, the psychiatric department of Baylor University College of Medicine has conducted advanced tests of new drugs for the mentally ill. The unit presents a perfect set-up for testing new drugs before they are placed on the market. For example, Mellaril, (a trade name for a tranquilizing type of drug) was tested at Wynne Unit before it went on the market.

The rehabilitation program was an important phase of the reforms brought about during the Ellis administration. This program embraced educational activities, vocational education, religious activities, recreation, and welfare. Money for most phases of the Rehabilitation Program came from the profits of the annual rodeo and from commissary sales.

The educational program was strengthened during the Ellis administration until over 60 percent of the inmates in the Department of Corrections were engaged in some phase of the program. The state provided, by law, compulsory school for all inmates who cannot pass a third grade test, thus 15 to 20 percent of all the inmates were compelled to attend classes. Classes were offered in various subjects on the grade school and the high school levels. Correspondence courses were given and paid for by the Department of Corrections. Over 800 books were donated to the library yearly, supplemented by a \$10,500 budget for books and magazines.

In 1956 the Texas Department of Corrections instituted the General Educational Development program whereby an inmate may be issued a high school certificate after he has successfully completed a series of examinations.

Vocational education classes were conducted in construction work, cooking and baking, television repair, brick-laying, welding, auto mechanics, carpentry, commercial sign painting, laundry operation, and poultry husbandry.

The recreational program consisted of outdoor sports such as baseball, touch football, boxing, wrestling, volleyball, and other competitive games. All types of indoor recreation were provided. Moving pictures were shown regularly for both recreational and educational purposes. In 1961 there were over 300 television sets in the Texas Department of Corrections. The sets were installed and maintained by the prison television shop.

Six chaplains ministered to the spiritual needs of inmates, with church services held regularly at all units. During the years from 1948 to 1961, three very beautiful chapels were built. They are the Chapel of Hope inside the Walls at Huntsville, the Chapel of Peace at

Eastham, and the Upper Room at Goree. Organs have been provided for all of the chapels.

The rehabilitation of the inmates was extended to the alcoholic offender. As early as 1949 Alcoholics Anonymous programs were established by Rev. B. D. Anderson and Warden Howard L. Sublett, who were convinced that in the Texas Department of Corrections there were inmates who had alcoholic problems. The increase in size and scope of the program within the next few years created the need for a full time alcoholic counselor to establish a definite program throughout the entire prison system. The 56th Texas Legislature established the position of Alcoholic Counselor within the Department of Corrections in 1959.

Membership roles for the first three quarters of 1960 showed a steady increase in membership. In the first quarter 1,384 inmates or 12 percent of the inmates in the prison became members of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the second quarter there was an increase to 16.5 percent, totaling 1,899 inmates enrolled. In the third quarter 20.8 percent, or a total of 1,382 inmates, were enrolled in the alcoholics program.

On April 1, 1959, the Board of Corrections and the administration of the Texas Department of Corrections established a system by which points would be awarded to inmates for such things as conduct, attitude, church attendance, work, recreational participation, educational achievement, and character development. The intention was that inmates would develop in themselves a desire to work and learn good work habits, and that their conduct and attitudes would be directed toward socially accepted objectives.

The program was designed for the purpose of allowing an inmate to accumulate points which would be a factor considered by the Board of Pardons and Paroles when the inmate was up for parole consideration. In this way a man was able to work toward a goal of eventual separation from prison.

Under the point-incentive program a minimum of 80 points per 3-month quarter had to be maintained in order for an inmate to receive recommendation for parole, but this did not guarantee parole.

During the period from 1948 to 1961, the morale of Texas Department of Corrections inmates was on the increase as indicated by the figures represented on the disciplinary reports of the prison system. In 1947 there were 80 inmates who mutilated themselves; from 1952 to 1961 no cases were reported. In 1947 there were 128 inmate escapes, in 1951 there were 5, and in 1961 only 2. There was also a decrease in the number of rule infractions by inmates, from a high of 648 in 1958 to 122 in 1961. The number of inmates killed by other inmates also decreased from eight in 1948 to none in the years 1960 and 1961. There was a decrease in the number of inmates killed by guards from nine in 1947 to none since 1951. These decreases were achieved although there was an increase in the prison population from 5,099 in 1957 to 11,463 in 1961.

In 12 years the Texas Department of Corrections had gone from one of the worst institutions in the United States to one of the best. As Austin MacCormick, nationally known penologist, told Director O. B. Ellis:

The corrective and constructive action that has been taken since 1947, and particularly since you have become the executive head of the Prison System, has resulted in progress that probably has not been surpassed in any equal period by any other prison system in the country.

All the vast functions and programs of the Texas Department of Corrections were operating without major interruptions until November 12, 1961 when the director, O. B. Ellis, died while attending a Board meeting. However, the death of the man did not mean the death of his dream, for the Texas Department of Corrections was to continue to move forward.

## THE ADMINISTRATION OF DR. GEORGE J. (WALKING GEORGE) BETO

After the death of O. B. Ellis, the Texas Department of Corrections was in need of another strong administrator to keep the Department on the path of progress that Mr. Ellis had blazed. It was no easy job for the Board of Corrections to find such an administrator, but on January 8, 1962, their choice was announced in a news release:

H. H. Coffield, Chairman of the Board of Corrections, following a called meeting of the Board, today announced that the position of Director of Corrections had been re-offered to Dr. George J. Beto. He also stated: "Recalling Beto's deep interest in the religious welfare of the inmates and the many hours he spent in counseling individual prisoners spiritually, we are also asking him to serve concurrently as Chief of Chaplains."

Dr. Beto was a man well qualified to hold the position of Director of Corrections. For 10 years (1949-59) he had served as president of Concordia College in Austin, Texas, during the last 6 of which he was also a member of the Texas Board of Corrections and chairman of its Inmate Committee. He was offered a reappointment to the Board by Governor Daniel prior to his advancement to the presidency of Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois.

He was elected "Man of the Year" by Texas Heritage Foundation in 1958 for his contribution to the Educational Program in the Texas Department of Corrections. He was nationally recognized as a penologist—in 1961 he visited and made a study of the major penal institutions of Europe.

Shortly after his arrival in Springfield, he was appointed to the salaried position of member of the Illinois Board of Pardons and Paroles by Governor Kerner. He was serving on that board at the time of his appointment as Director of the Texas Department of Corrections.

While in Austin, Beto received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Texas. His doctorate work was done in the area of Educational Administration.

In responding to the Board's offer, Beto asserted:

Inasmuch as the provisions of the original appointment offered by the Texas Board of Corrections have been altered and expanded to include a spiritual ministry, I am moved to accept the appointment. The Texas Department of Corrections with its 12,000 inmates and 13 units represents one of the greatest challenges in the American correctional field. I look forward to working with the nine-man Board of Corrections made up of leading Texas citizens, and the dedicated and competent administrative assistants and unit wardens.

Dr. Beto not only continued to enlarge and refine almost all of the Ellis programs, but he began other programs designed to enable the Department to continue to improve and progress. The tremendous physical expansion formatted by Ellis was almost completely implemented under the administration of Beto, and the system continued to progress toward its current state of refinement.

Being a firm believer in personal contact with inmates, Dr. Beto set out soon after

assuming his post in March 1962 and started "getting to know" his inmates. Any hour of the day or night he could be seen coming in the back door of a unit to make his rounds. His office, too, was always open to inmates' families, for he believed the more he knew about an inmate and his problems, the more he could do to aid the inmate on his road to rehabilitation. Along this same line, one of his first administrative actions was to appoint a committee to study the uniformity of punishment and rewards throughout the system. This committee's recommendations were accepted and a revised set of rules governing punishment and rewards was implemented in May 1962. Many forms of petty punishment were abolished, and a limit was placed on the length of solitary confinement.

Also in May 1962, the Ferguson Unit for first offenders between the ages of 17 and 22 was dedicated. Ferguson programs were designed to help keep the youthful inmate from returning to prison after release. The successful public service program Operation Teenager also began in 1962.

In 1963, the Ellis Unit, formerly the Smither Unit and re-named in memory of the late O. B. Ellis, former director, was dedicated giving the Texas Department of Corrections an up-to-date maximum security unit for up to 1,700 inmates. Habitual offenders, malcontents, and high security risks were assigned to the unit.

The orderly transition of the inmate back into society was of vital concern to Dr. Beto, and in September 1963 he launched the pre-release program with the dual purpose of preparing inmates for release back into society and offering them practical knowledge and instruction presented by qualified specialists and designed to aid them in becoming productive, law-abiding citizens. Originating at TDC's Jester Unit, specialized programs were later begun on the Goree, Ferguson, and Wynne Units. At the time of Beto's retirement in 1972, over 24,000 inmates had completed the program. Of primary importance, however, was the fact the pre-release program had significantly contributed to reducing the recidivism rate in Texas from approximately 33 percent to 20 percent, one of the lowest in the nation.

Also during 1963, there were two legislative actions favorable to the Department of Corrections—Senate Bill 338 and House Resolution 469. To TDC, Senate Bill 338 proved to be one of the most significant legislative acts ever passed, for it authorized the Department to manufacture industrial articles for sale to other state agencies and political subdivisions, which were required to purchase them provided quality and price were satisfactory.

With the exception of the License Plate Plant, prior to passage of this legislation, TDC industrial facilities produced goods primarily for prison consumption, such as: shoes, clothing, textiles, mattresses, brooms and mops, and canned goods. Only seven plants existed. However, by 1964, six new industries had begun operation and sales to outside agencies had risen to \$982,000. Industrial plants had increased to 19 by 1968 and sales exceeded \$4 million. By 1972, TDC's 22 facilities were producing goods which sold for well in excess of \$6 million. The Industrial Program had become the financial backbone of the Department of Corrections.

House Resolution 469, the mandate for which was written by Dr. Beto, directed the staffs of the Texas Department of Corrections and Sam Houston State College (now University) to

explore, cooperatively, the feasibility of developing a continued program of statistical research, training, and study in criminology, penology, juvenile delinquency, and related fields. This led to the formation of the Institute of Contemporary Corrections and the Behavioral Sciences at Sam Houston State College, which has since greatly contributed to research and training of prison personnel.

In keeping with Beto's firm belief that "a vibrant religion is essential to rehabilitation," the Department seriously began to refine its religious program in May 1963 when the Board of Corrections adopted the new Chaplains' Standards. These standards stipulated that chaplains be college and seminary graduates, have had successful pastoral experience, and have the endorsement of their communions. Chaplains must be either clinically trained or become involved in clinical pastoral training during their first year with the Department. Toward this end, a chaplains' training program was begun in 1964 and by 1965 TDC had received approval for, and initiated a Clinical Pastoral Education Program with an accredited supervisor. TDC had only one clinically-trained chaplain in 1961; by 1967 there were 12 full-time and several part-time chaplains.

In 1964 the Department of Corrections dedicated the Diagnostic Center and converted all their intake procedures to center around this unit. All new inmates received by the Department of Corrections spend their first 4 to 6 weeks at the facility where they undergo comprehensive medical, mental, educational, personality, and aptitude testing. After all factors are evaluated, the inmate is placed on the unit and work assignment which best suits his personal needs and occupational abilities. Since 1964, the Diagnostic Unit has been the first home of all incoming offenders.

Also in 1964 the final approval was given to sell tracts of land at the Central, Harlem, Blue Ridge, and Goree Units, and the Board went on record as favoring the construction of a medium security prison unit on the land it proposed to purchase in Anderson County with the proceeds from the land sales. Sale of the five composite tracts netted the State slightly less than \$5 million, approximately \$3 million of which was used to purchase 18,000 acres of Anderson County land in June 1965. Later named in honor of H. H. Coffield, member of the Board of Corrections and its chairman longer than anyone in the history of the Texas prison system, the Coffield Unit had expanded to include over 22,000 acres by 1972, making it by far the largest unit in the system.

Without a doubt, the area in which the greatest expansion occurred during Dr. Beto's tenure was that of education. The Adult Basic Education Program was initiated in 1965 with the purpose of offering a good education for inmates from the first through the ninth grades. This program, along with the General Education Development (G. E. D.) Program begun in 1956, enabled the Department of Corrections to provide a well-rounded 12-year educational program to all inmates. Through 1972, over 3,000 inmates had received their G. E. D. certificates.

With the ever-increasing number of G. E. D. graduates, however, there arose a need for education beyond the high school level. Therefore, a pilot program was begun during 1965 on the Ramsey Unit in cooperation with Alvin Junior College to offer college level courses to eligible inmates. Shortly thereafter, Alvin Junior College was joined by Lee College and

Brazosport and Henderson County Junior Colleges in teaching both academic and vocational college-level courses. TDC's College Program grew to become the largest college level program among penal institutions in the nation.

Also, during 1965 a new building at the Goree Unit was completed, a long overdue update of the facilities available for female offenders. The new building provided rooms for 204 women, a visiting room, administrative offices, and food service facilities.

Other major Departmental construction was completed in 1966 when the Administration Building in Huntsville was ready for occupancy. Completed at a cost of \$735,000, the building provided offices for the Director and his staff, the Business Office, Classification and Records, and the State Auditor.

Additionally, because of the constant increase in administrative records, in 1966 the Board of Corrections determined that efficiency and economy demanded that a computer be added to the Machine Records Section. Prior to this time the Department had been using IBM accounting machines for their data processing. The new computer not only greatly reduced the time necessary to process records; it also greatly expanded the research potential of the records system.

In 1967 an appropriation raised the salary levels offered by the Department of Corrections to the point where TDC could compete with private industry for manpower. Since the time Dr. Beto became director, the minimum salaries for custodial officers had risen from \$256 to \$424 per month. With this, the Department was able to recruit a better qualified staff. In addition to the increase in salaries, employee benefits were improved, including the establishment of insurance programs, recreational facilities, and a 40-hour work week.

The Windham School District of the Texas Department of Corrections was established in 1968 by the authority of Senate Bill 35. Passed into law by the legislature, the Bill became effective for the school year 1968-69, and later gained accreditation by the Texas Education Agency in September 1970. Named for Board of Corrections member James M. Windham, the overall goal of the Windham School Program is to provide the opportunity for its students to acquire the academic and vocational skills necessary for an adult to function in free-world society. After 4 years in operation, Windham had developed its program to include over 125 professionally trained and certified educators, a comprehensive non-graded academic curriculum, and an extensive vocational training program. Over 7,000 inmates attend classes weekly.

In May of 1969, House Bill 535 was passed giving the Department of Corrections the authority to establish a Work Furlough Program. Through this program, inmates live on the unit but are bussed to and from their free-world jobs each day. The inmates pay room, board, and transportation expenses and either deposit their salaries into savings accounts or send funds home. Designed to bridge the gap between the institution and the community, the Work Furlough Program originated on the Jester Unit, but was later expanded to the Goree and Wynne Units.

Also on the Jester Unit, the Rockwell Building for the pre-release program was completed and put into use during 1969. In August of the same year, Dr. Beto was elected president of the American Correctional Association at its annual meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

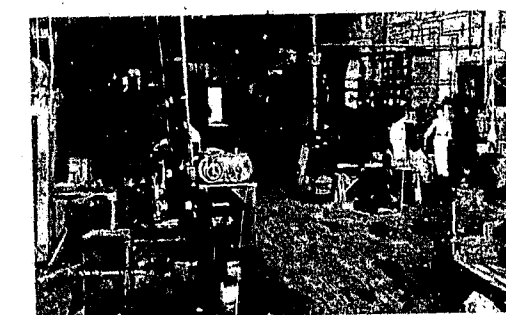
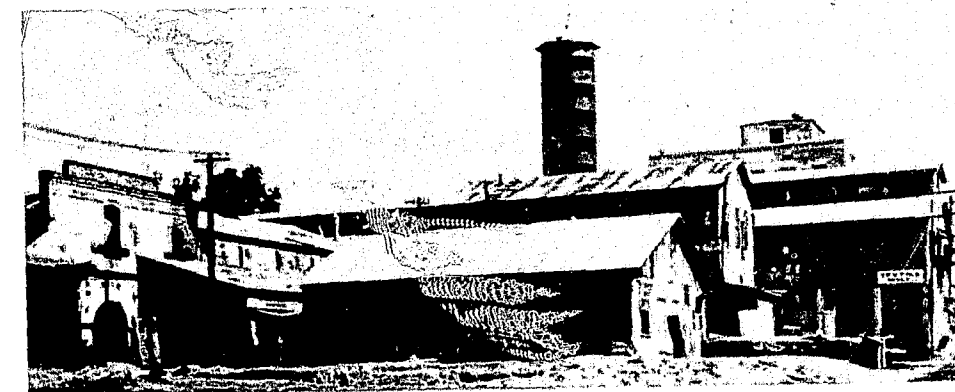
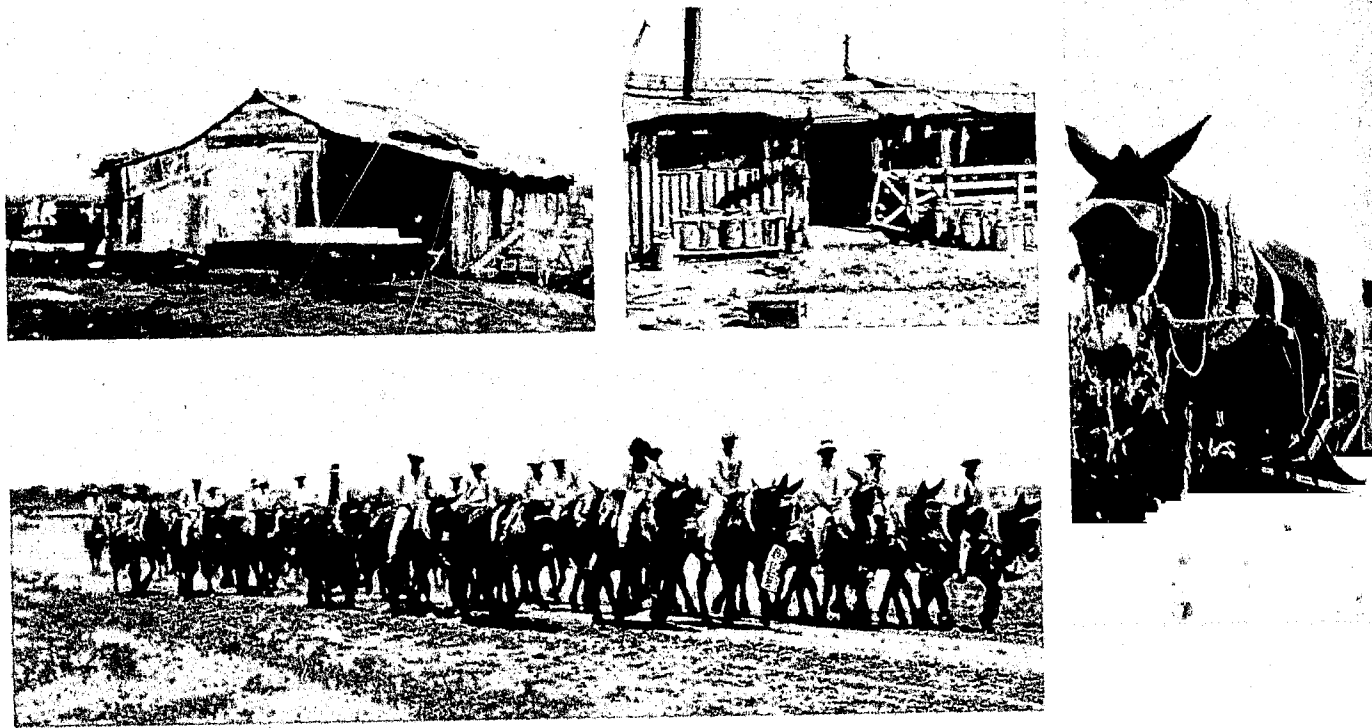
Operation Kick-It was begun in 1970 as a public service program in which inmates convicted of drug offenses speak before schools and organizations. Later a second panel was formed and the two together appeared before over half a million people during Kick It's first 2 years in existence. Also during 1970, Dr. Beto was selected as the U. S. Delegate to the 4th U. N. Conference on Prevention of Crime and Treatment of the Offender held in Kyoto, Japan.

In 1971 construction was begun on the \$5 million Center for Continuing Education in Corrections on the campus of Sam Houston State University. The center will serve the Department's service training requirements and house the School of Contemporary Corrections at the University. Constructed by inmate labor, the center could be considered the first physical child of the marriage on paper between the prison and the University in House Resolution 469.

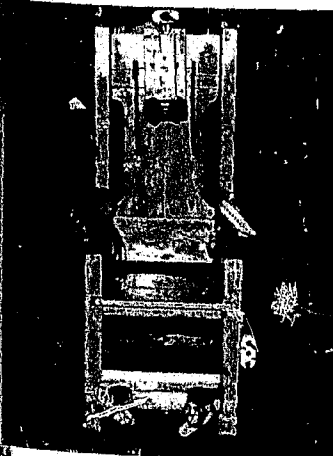
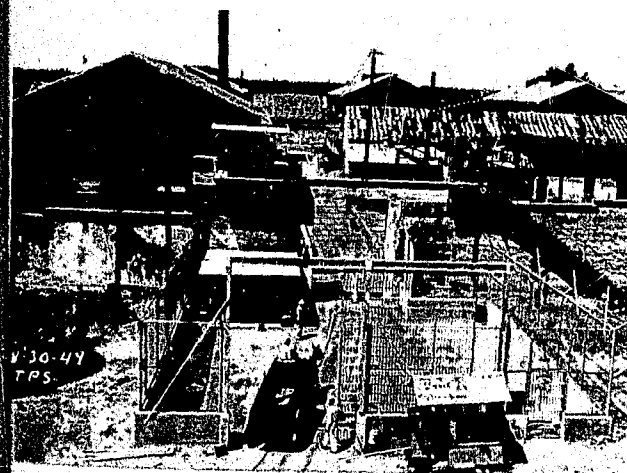
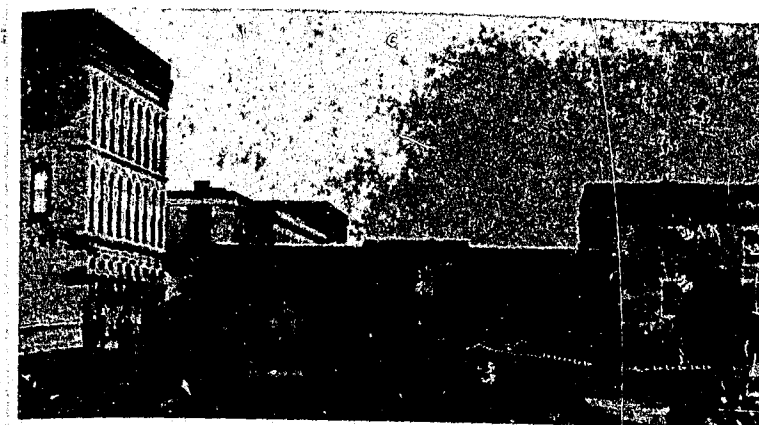
The Agricultural Program also continued to expand under Beto's able administration. By 1972, TDC's livestock and poultry programs were operating on 55,000 acres of native and improved pastureland. The extensive pasture improvement program had greatly increased the carrying capacity of these pastures, a large portion of which were occupied by the Department's 16,000 head of beef cattle. The swine population, too, numbered over 16,000 head. While the dairy herd had decreased during the 10-year period, per cow production had almost tripled. Likewise, the edible crop acreage had decreased from 6,500 to approximately 5,000 acres, but because of the continued increase in mechanization and further implementation of modern agricultural techniques, vegetable production had increased from 6 to 13 million pounds yearly.

In August 1972, Dr. Beto resigned as head of the Texas Department of Corrections and was succeeded by W.J. Estelle, Jr. After 10 years of progressive administration as Director of Corrections, Dr. Beto had decided to retire to the quieter academic life and accepted a teaching post with the Institute of Contemporary Corrections and the Behavioral Sciences at Sam Houston State University. He could leave the Department with a justly deserved sense of pride and satisfaction, for the prison system to which he had contributed so much during the past decade was now considered one of the best penal institutions in the nation.

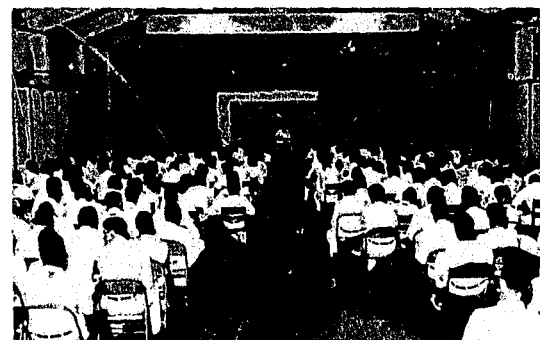
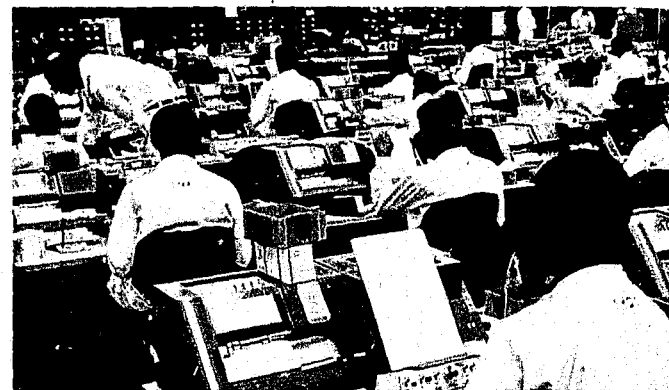
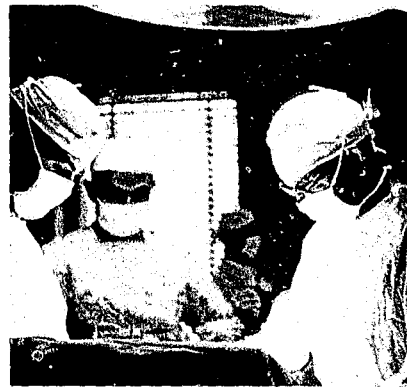
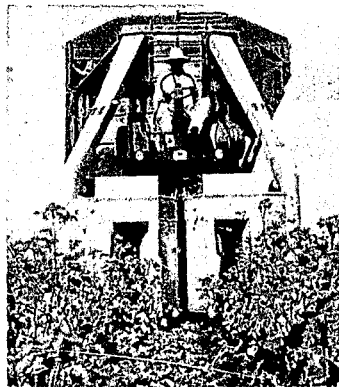




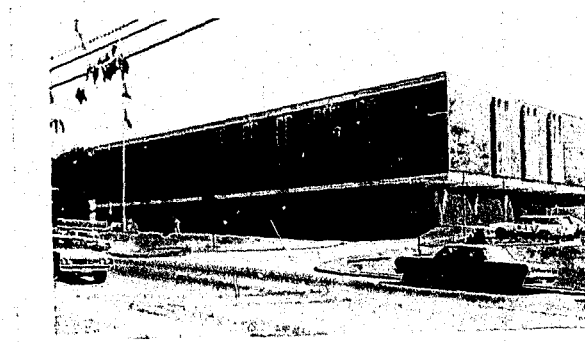
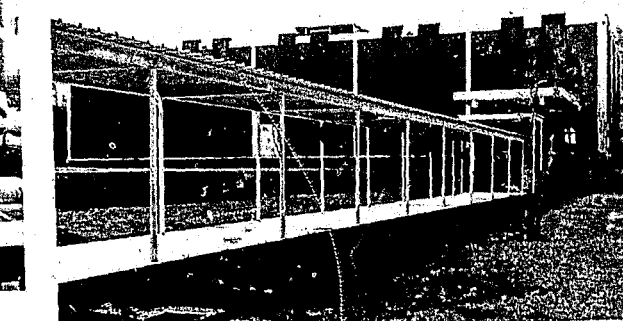
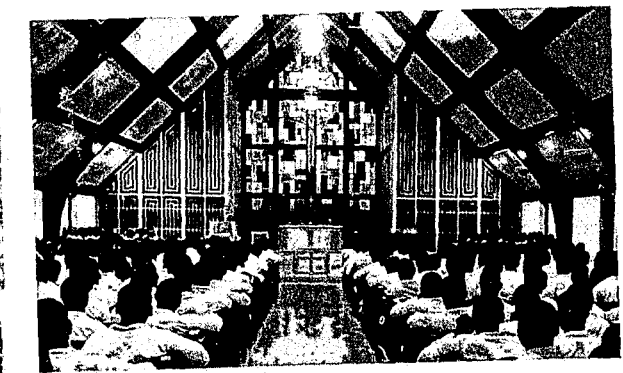
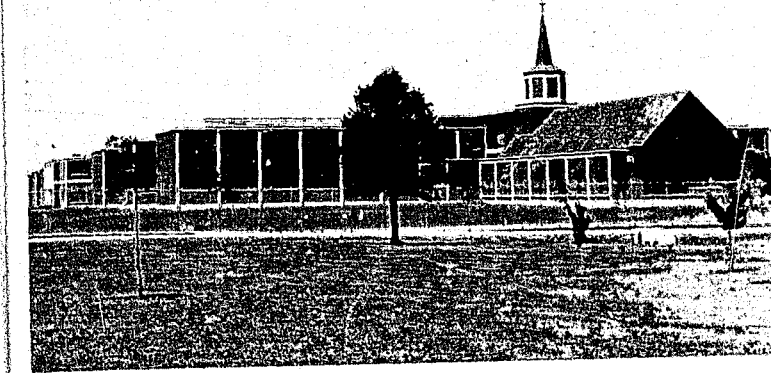
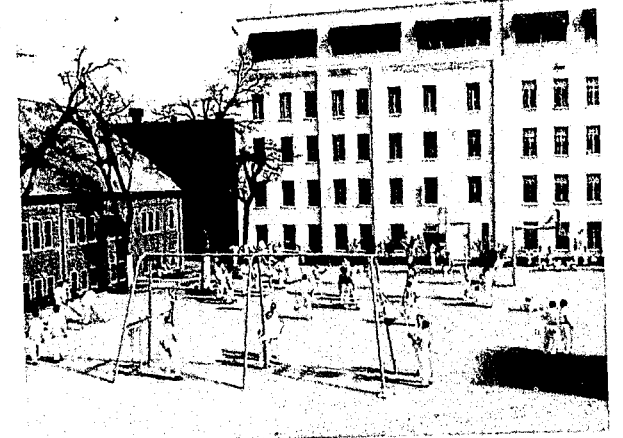
ROW 1: Vegetable supply headquarters in 1947, complete with wash facilities; A typical prison dairy in the mid-forties; Mule with shuck collar around 1890 - the hard way to plow a field. ROW 2: Mule power on its way to the fields. ROW 3: Laundry day in the forties. Clothes were boiled in iron kettles using homemade lye soap and then hung on barbed wire clotheslines to dry. ROW 4: Machinery purchased secondhand in the 1890's still in use at Huntsville textile mill in the late forties. ROW 5: Inside a prison machine shop in 1949.



ROW 1: Outer gate to the Huntsville Penitentiary around 1895 before the wall was built; Business establishments on the north side of the Huntsville square about 1890. Row 2: Dormitory on the Retrieve Unit in 1950, complete with laundry facilities; Inside and outside views of the Huntsville Unit's restroom and shower facilities in the mid-forties. ROW 3: Backgate entrance to the Huntsville Unit in the late forties, when mule-driven wagons were still the custom; Overcrowded cell blocks in west building of the Huntsville Unit in 1949; Officer J. P. Hicks, with pistol, watches while other officer shakes an inmate down at the Clemens Unit in 1929. ROW 4: The electric chair, no longer in use, last used in July, 1964.



ROW 1: Mechanical harvesters have become a vital part of the agricultural program; During fiscal year 1972, the Bus Shop renovated 511 buses; Complete medical services are available to all inmates. ROW 2: By the end of 1972, 85 inmates had received Associate of Arts degrees through TDC's College Program; Records Conversion continually updates Texas motor vehicle registrations. ROW 3: Modern horse barns have been constructed to house security and stock animals; A floriculture class has been added to the Goree Unit's vocational training program; The Central Unit's canning plant processes over 5 million pounds of raw products yearly. ROW 4: Proceeds from the annual Texas Prison Rodeo provide for inmate rehabilitative services; Modern dairy barns facilitate the production of wholesome dairy products. ROW 5: A.A. Meetings are held on every unit within the Department of Correc-



ROW 1: Sanitary kitchen and dining facilities are provided on all TDC units; Prison yards, such as this one on the Huntsville Unit, enable inmates to participate in recreational activities. ROW 2: The Ellis Unit was completed in 1963; Chapels on all units hold religious services regularly. ROW 3: Laundry processes have improved greatly over the years; Individual cells are kept clean and orderly; Inmates may purchase a variety of items from unit commissaries. ROW 4: Modern dormitory facilities on the Ferguson Unit promote wholesome, healthy living conditions; The recently completed Goree Facility provides various rehabilitative opportunities for TDC's female population. ROW 5: Most administrative offices are located in Huntsville's modern Administration Building.

## TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS TODAY

The Texas Department of Corrections in 1973 was a 17,000-inmate, 14-unit system located throughout East Texas, with each of the units a specialized segment of a nearly self-sustaining organization.

The individual units are alike in some ways but different in other ways, and some serve unique functions with respect to other units of the Texas correctional system. Some knowledge of the operation and purposes of the units are prerequisite to an accurate comprehension of the overall correctional system in Texas. Table 2 presents a summary of important features of the 14 units.

Predominantly agricultural units are Central, Clemens, Coffield, Darrington, Eastham, Ellis, Ferguson, Jester, Ramsey, Retrieve, and Wynne. However, only Clemens and Retrieve have exclusively agricultural inmate work programs.

A sawmill is the lone manufacturing endeavor at Coffield, but a sheet metal industry is planned which will include the manufacture of metal desks and filing cabinets. Darrington has a tire recapping plant which recaps tires for 226 agencies and political subdivisions of the State of Texas. A garment factory is operated at Eastham, and a mop and broom factory is located at Ferguson.

The only manufacturing operation at Jester is the brick plant in which all the brick used by the construction department is made. In addition to the extensive agriculture program and the brick making operation, prime emphasis at Jester is on the pre-release program. Male inmates, from throughout the system, who are to discharge their sentences are assigned to the unit 6 months to a year before their discharge dates. The inmates at pre-release spend the last 5 weeks of their stay in prison actively engaged in classroom study, counseling, work and self-improvement activities.

Units which have extensive industrial programs in addition to their agricultural operations are Central, Ellis, Ramsey, and Wynne.

Central is the site of several important Department industries related to agriculture and transportation. Also, the agricultural department offices are located at Central; all other Department of Corrections administration offices are in Huntsville.

The packing plant at Central processes all meat for the entire Department and the cannery handles all the canning of produce from the various units.

Central has a trucking and warehousing operation, referred to as the Big Commissary, maintained to serve the southern units. Items such as tractors, farm implements, canned goods, seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, flour, rice, cornmeal, beans, peas, and many other items are stocked. The Big Commissary is also responsible for the distribution of anhydrous ammonia to the southern units each year. Trucks are dispatched to other units as needed to haul feed, livestock, farm implements, and various other items necessary for operation of the units.

A feed mill is located at Central. The mill mixes all types of livestock and poultry feed for distribution to other units and processes 60,000 pounds of cornmeal and rice monthly for all units within the Department.

An important industrial program on the Unit is the soap and detergent factory which produces a wide variety of products for use by the Department of Corrections and for sale to other state agencies.

The Ellis Unit not only has its own cotton gin and the only syrup mill in the Department, but also has an extensive industrial program consisting of a shoe factory, a dental laboratory, a garment factory, a sawmill and lumber operation, and a bus repair facility.

The agricultural program at Ramsey includes raising cotton, livestock feed, and garden crops; beef cattle herd; egg production; swine feeding operation; and dairying. The industrial program consists of a brush factory and a furniture refinishing plant (for metal, wood, and upholstered furniture). These industries, which employ 300 inmates, accounted for sales of goods and services in excess of \$500,000 to other state agencies during the past fiscal year.

Also at Ramsey, 144 inmates are employed in the southern units' farm maintenance department which is in charge of construction, refrigeration, electrical work, and maintenance supply for the six southern units.

The Wynne Unit raises feed and forage crops to support their dairy, egg production, and hog feeder operations.

One of the industrial programs at Wynne is the records conversion facility which began operation in October 1967 to assist the Texas Highway Department convert its motor vehicle title records to a computer system. Approximately 500 inmates were trained in the various tasks needed. The facility not only maintains and updates that file, but has been expanded to perform services for other State agencies. In 1972 a Braille section employing 40 inmates trained and certified to read Braille was added. This section produces Braille books for the Texas Education Department and does some work for agencies outside of Texas.

The mattress factory at Wynne produces several types of mattresses, including gym pads, exercise mats, and pillows, for sale to State educational facilities, hospitals, geriatric centers, and for use within the Department.

Three Department of Corrections units, Diagnostic, Goree, and Huntsville, have no agricultural program.

Diagnostic is devoted solely to receiving, testing, and classifying new inmates, with the purpose of making the transition from jail to prison as easy as possible. All inmates received are cleared through the Unit whether they are newly received, parole violators, returning from bench warrants, or reprieve returnees. The Diagnostic Unit is equipped to handle approximately 700 inmates, 120 of whom are permanently assigned to assist the staff of employees.

The facilities at Diagnostic provide segregation of first offenders from recidivists and protect the weak from the strong, which has resulted in a marked improvement in morale and attitude of the entire inmate population.

Processing includes an orientation concerning regulations, interview by a medical officer, and interview by a counseling officer. Education, intelligence, personality, and occupational tests are administered to all inmates and the results become a part of the



permanent record. Medical and dental examinations are performed, medical histories are prepared, vaccinations and inoculations are given, and X-rays and laboratory studies are made as indicated. From the data collected, specialists prepare comprehensive case histories used in classification, assignment, and in planning the treatment programs of each inmate.

The Goree Unit is the only women's prison in Texas. Part of the processing of women entering the Department of Corrections is conducted at Goree. After completing the initial portion of the new-inmate processing procedures at the Diagnostic Unit, the incoming women inmates are taken to Goree for completion of the procedures. Each woman who enters must remain in quarantine at Goree until she is medically clear. During this time she takes a battery of tests which determine her I.Q., aptitudes, and educational achievement, and measure deviant behavior. Orientation sessions acquaint the inmate with the rules and regulations of the Goree Unit and of the Texas Department of Corrections. Then, the classification committee plans a program of work, recreation, education, and self-improvement activities to fit the needs of each inmate.

Approximately half of the women inmates are employed in the garment factory which is the only industrial program on the Unit. The garment factory manufactures items for State hospitals and special schools, Texas Department of Corrections officers' shirts, and Goree inmate uniforms.

Some of the women are permitted to participate in the work release and work furlough programs, which allow the inmate to help herself financially while still under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections.

The pre-release program at Goree is designed to bridge the gap between confinement and free society. Six months prior to the date of discharge, the inmates are promoted to the pre-release program. One month prior to release, the inmate begins to attend lectures of special interest to her. Speakers from nearby communities who are experts in their field participate in this program. The topics chosen are those which will be most important to the inmate after release. During her last month of confinement, the inmate may attend church services in town, and other special outings are also allowed during this period.

The Huntsville Unit, often referred to as the "Walls Unit" because of the high brick walls surrounding the compound, is located in the city of Huntsville. The inmates there are assigned to the industries and essential service operations.

The main hospital for the Texas Department of Corrections is at the Huntsville Unit and provides medical care and treatment for all of the male population. For examination and treatment requiring more specialized capabilities and more elaborate facilities, patients are referred to John Sealy Hospital in Galveston. Plastic surgery and ear, nose, and throat surgery are performed and most of the inmates' dental problems are handled at the prison hospital at Huntsville. There is also an ophthalmology service under the direction and staff of the University of Texas Medical Branch.

There are a number of industrial operations at the Huntsville Unit. One of them is the license plate plant which was established as a joint operation with the Texas Highway Department in the mid 1930's. The plant manufactures all the license plates for the state of Texas. The textile mill processes cloth for the various garment factories within the Depart-

ment, plus various other fabrics such as terry and duck toweling, cord strips for the mattress factory, and mop roving for the mop and broom factory. Other industrial work programs at the Huntsville Unit are listed in Table 2.

All units of the Texas Department of Corrections have education and recreation programs. Also, treatment programs designed to benefit every inmate who is willing to be helped are available throughout the system.



TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF TDC UNITS  
1973

Unit	Year Established	Area in Acres	Type of Inmates	Number of Inmates	Number of Employees	Principal Inmate Work Programs
Central	1908 As Imperial Farm	4,459	First offenders over 20; young recidivists	720	122	Garden and field crops; beef, pork, and egg production, packing plant; cannery; warehousing; trucking; feed lot; soap and detergent factory; cheese factory
Clemens	1901	8,116	First offenders, over 21; recidivists age 17-21	1,070	114	Garden and field crops; beef, pork, fish, and egg production; cotton gin; grain dryer
Coffield	1965 As Anderson County Unit	22,460	Convicted of nonviolent crimes	880	130	Beef and pork production; garden and field crops; sawmill; sheet metal industry (planned)
Darrington	1918	6,770	Recidivists age 22-25	800	106	Garden and field crops; beef, pork, and egg production; tire recapping; cold storage warehouse
Diagnostic	1964	93	All incoming	700	87	Assist TDC personnel process incoming inmates
Eastham	1917	12,970	Maximum security	1,510	182	Garden and field crops; dairy; beef, pork, and egg production; cotton gin; garment factory
Ellis	1963 As Smither Unit	11,672	Recidivists; high escape risks; malcontents	1,540	196	Garden and field crops; dairy; beef, pork, and egg production; cotton gin; syrup mill; shoe factory; dental laboratory; garment factory; sawmill and lumber operation; bus repair
Ferguson	1962	4,355	First offenders, age 17-21	1,530	159	Orchards; garden and field crops; beef, pork, and egg production; mop and broom factory

TABLE 2 (Concluded)

Goree	1900	899	Women	600	75	Garment Factory
Huntsville	1849	47	First offenders over 25; promotees from farms; certain medical classifications	1,960	402	License plate plant; textile mill; print shop; cardboard box factory; coffee roasting and blending; plastics shop; mechanical and machine shop
Jester	1885 As Harlem Farm	5,011	Pre-release	910	104	Garden and field crops; pork, turkey, and egg production; dairy; brick plant
Ramsey	1908	16,844	Recidivists over age 25	1,780	224	Garden and field crops; dairy; beef, pork, and egg production; cotton gin; brush factory; furniture refinishing plant; equipment maintenance department
Retrieve	1918	7,331	Recidivists over age 25	710	99	Garden and field crops; dairy; beef, pork, and egg production
Wynne	1937	1,473	Mentally and physically handicapped	1,570	165	Forage and silage crops; dairy; pork, and egg production; mattress factory; records conversion facility (including Braille section)

## EPILOG

Knowing and understanding the events of the past and how they can be used to shape that part of the future over which we have control, will many times enable us to improve conditions which might otherwise have gone unnoticed. This history was written (1) to inform those who do not know the past of the Texas prison system, (2) to remind those who may have forgotten the lessons of the past, (3) to encourage those who are discouraged because they believe that improvements are not possible, and (4) to demonstrate that the foresight, dedication, and hard work of a relatively few individuals can and does affect the lives of their contemporaries, as well as the lives of people yet unborn.

# END