Prison Reform

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What problem did the movement attempt to address?

The Prison reform attempted to address the problem of the conditions of prisons, the punishment for crimes, treatment of the mentally ill and better institutions for them, and imprisonment for debt.
Earlier forms of the Reform

- The use of prisons as a tool for confining and punishing criminals evolved during the 1700s.
- Religious-minded reformers during that period set out to improve the young American republic by creating public schools and libraries.
- They also sought to aid fellow citizens in improving their morals. At that time, a philosophy began to develop that imprisoning criminals would not only protect society but redeem sinful wrongdoers.
Chronology Of the Movement

- January 1st 1786: Advances in Punishment and Reduction of Such.
- September 28th 1824: Juvenile Detention Centers.
- September 29th 1829: Police Reformation.
- October 18th 1857: Prison Husks, ships used to store prisoners awaiting transport.
Solutions that the Movement Proposed

- Mentally ill inmates will receive help from hospitals and will not have to suffer in the prisons
- Destroy the sense of "criminal community" and encourage penance
- Create prison libraries, basic literacy (for Bible reading), reduction of whipping and beating, commutation of sentences, and separation of women, children and the sick.
Controversies of what the purpose of prison was. For punishment or penitence?

1821 Auburn Prison went into lockdown and 80 of the men either committed suicide or had mental breakdowns.
Dorothea Dix, whose detailed accounts of conditions in prisons and asylums resulted in improved conditions and the concept that the deranged were mentally ill.

Dr. John Galt, a doctor at Eastern Lunatic Asylum, who revolutionized the idea that the insane had dignity

William Ladd, whose leadership within the American Peace Society ultimately gave improvements in the internal organizations for collective security

Louis Dwight- founder of the Boston Prison Discipline Society
Juvenile Detention Centers

After the War of 1812, prisons for minors began to be built called juvenile detention centers. These were used to try and correct child behaviors rather than just harbor criminals. The first juvenile detention center opened in 1824.
How Effective were the goals?

Dorothea Dix co-founded thirty-two mental hospitals, a school for the blind, and many nursing training facilities.

Most goals were met, women went to separate prisons and children were sent to Juvenile Detention Center. The Prison Reform was pretty successful.
What the leaders said about it?

Dorothea Dix told the Massachusetts Legislature that the insane were "confined in this Commonwealth in cages, closets, cellars, stalls, pens! Chained, beaten with rods, lashed into obedience."

“While we diminish the stimulant of fear, we must increase to prisoners the incitements of hope, in proportion as we extinguish the terrors of the law, we should awaken and strengthen the control of the conscience.” -Dorothea Dix

“If you don't want to be beaten, imprisoned, mutilated, killed or tortured then you shouldn't condone such behavior towards anyone, be they human or not.” -Moby
Political Implications of the movement

- States were faced with a decline number of mental hospitals and a rising number of mentally ill in prisons.
- This results in higher costs. It also raises the moral question that they are "ill" so should they be put in prison.
What did the movement achieve

- The prison reform movement improved prison conditions
- Better facilities and institutions to handle certain offenders including the mentally ill, and the abolishment of debtors' prisons
- The construction of asylums for the deranged and mentally ill
- The idea of separating men, women, and children into different prisons
Related historical events

- Penitentiary Act of 1779 in the UK
  - British Act of Parliament passed in 1779 which introduced state prisons for the first time.
- The Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, founded in 1816.
For people in prisons in the US, communication with the outside world was difficult. Guards would tear up letters. Others would be intercepted and read.

In 1978 the Supreme Court ruled that the news media do not have guaranteed rights of access to jails and prisons.

More towards the African-American race.
Reflections

Nolan- This topic was important to me because I wanted to know how the modern day prison system came to be. I learned a lot about the development of prisons and mental hospitals. The piece of information that stuck out the most was that before the reform, men, women, and children could be imprisoned together which seems crazy to think about.

Cole- Although many people view prisons and mental hospitals as being a filthy place filled with criminals but the prison reform movement allowed the prisons and hospitals to be upgraded and not even close to as brutal as before the Movement. A lot of money is spent into the livelihood of the prisons and mental hospitals to change the lives of the people entering them and although it is thought of a bad place, it is filled with the hopes and dreams of thousands.

Aundre- The prison reform was a huge stepping stone in the development of penitentiaries. If the prison reform didn’t happen then prisons right now could be very brutal with no rights for the inmates. The Prison Reform successfully separated women, men and children from going to prison together, that could have been really dangerous for everyone in prison. I think the Prison Reform was very important part of U.S history.
http://www.ushistory.org/us/26d.asp - this cite was very helpful in finding the important people including Dorothea Dix and Louis Dwight. Also, it gave a brief overview of the order of events and was a good starting place for research. The source appears credible because it is a .org owned by the Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia.

http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/prison-reforms-in-the-1800s - this source was used as a chronological timeline for the events and breakthroughs of the reform in the early-mid 1800’s. However, this was not a main source of information because it mostly just provided dates.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_United_States_prison_systems - this cite provided tons of information about prison reforms and asylums for the mentally ill. Although it is a wiki-page, all the information we gathered was crosschecked with other sources just to make sure. The bibliography at the bottom of the page also directed us to other useful sources such as the next one on this list.

Christianson, Scott (1998), With Liberty for Some: 500 years of Imprisonment in America, Boston. This was an interesting source and it was very useful for the related historical events slide. Scott Christenson is a well respected journalist, historian, and human rights advocate which makes this a pretty credible source I think.