

OVERSEERS REPORTS

1814

May, 1814

1814

To the Honor^{ble} General Assembly of the State of Connecticut
to be holden at Hartford in & for s^d State on the 2^d Thursday
of May 1814.

The overseers of New-Gate prison bey leave to report
to your honors a few facts relative to the state of the prison,
the year past, its present state, & future prospects, which
they think necessary to be communicated at this time.

There are at present 47 prisoners, all of them except
one in perfect health. There have been but two deaths during
the course of the year. Very little has been expended for
medecine or Physician's bills. The occasional use of
bilious pills, which have been lately kept at the prison, has,
it is thought, been very useful, in preventing, or removing,
various complaints, & superceeding any further medical aid, The
Overseers have taken pains to keep the prison & the
prisoners cleanly, & have succeeded so far, at least, as to
prevent the formation & stagnation of noxious & pestilential
vapour; but some of the prisoners appear to love filth, &
are inclined never to put off their clothes for washing, or
so much as to wash their face & hands Its this tendency
to wallow in filth arises out of their degraded condition,
& is no more than a natural expression of mental depravity,
it requires a constant effort of the prison keeper to
counteract it. Their clothing is comfortable; they are well
supplied with blankets; the straw, on which they sleep, is
frequently changed; but in the warm season many choose to

May, 1814

- 2 -

dispencc with it altogether, because it harbours insects, which are not a little troublesome. Their ration of provisions is a pound of bread, a pound of beef, or $3/4$ of a lb of pork, & 2 lbs of potatoes, or 3 gills of peas or beans, & three half pints of cider; about one third of the time they have fresh meat, & usually cod or other fish as often as once a week in the warm season Their bread is nutritious & good & their food is, in general, sufficient for health & for labour, though some would consume more if supplied them. There have been no escapes or insurrections the year past; & all the prisoners are at present lightly shackled, except the notorious Lawrence, whom no man has hitherto been able to tame, and Peter Carrier a negro man, who has attempted formerly to murder one of the guard, who are loaded with heavy chains, but, many as they are, they find means to cut them off.

Unfortunately the prisoners have been but little employed in hard labour, the winter past, for want of coal to work at their forges. The reasons of which require distinct notice. A few years since great destruction was made in the forests which has supplied the prison with Coal by a tornado the farmers converted much of the wood, which was ² into coal; this for some years, kept down the price of coal That resource failing, the diminution of wood, & the increase of factories occasioned a sudden rise of that article, the competition was great, still the market was not supplied. The last season the

May, 1814

- 3 -

Overseers raised the price of chesnut coal to 7 dollars
? hundred ? they calculated that this
would insure a supply; but in this they were disappointed.
The independent farmers were, through the fall, more profitably
employed in saving their immense crop of fruit, in
making cider & brandy for which the war had created a
great demand; Under these circumstances coal was not to be
had, at any price, which the small profits of manufacturing
nails would justify. The prisoners, however, have not been
wholly unemployed. They have been occupied in forming
a room in the south east quarter of the work house, preparing
the necessary accommodations, & making tools, for the purpose
of carrying on several new branches of manufactures, which
the Overseers are about to introduce, & which will, they
believe, contribute to the benefit of each other, the State &
1st They design to set up the manufacture of cut nails,
which have now come into general use, & have, in part,
superceeded the use of wrought nails. This business would
have been earlier introduced but the war has prevented
the importation of Russia plates which are far better
than any plates of home manufacture. This embarrassment,
it is hoped, will soon be removed. The Cutting the plates &
heading the nails is a simple process & attended with little
expencc or waste of materials.

2. The casting of butts is agreed to be introduced; a
furnace at the north end of the work house is constructing;
one of the prisoners lately committed supposed as an adept, in
that business; & has a set of tools, & some materials
for the manufacture on hand, as he says, & wishes to pursue

the business; at least while he is a prisoner, & hopes to meet with due encouragement.

3 The manufacture of screws for butts, putting up ceilings, &c which are more & more superceding the use of common nails, in various uses, is considered of importance at the prison; the business is set up & pursued in various parts of the State, to great advantage. Tools for forging, swaging, cutting the spiral thread heading, & sawing the head, are prepared or preparing: most, of these the prisoners are able to make, & some of them they have made in great perfection.

4 Wire drawing is contemplated, reducing wire of a large size to the various numbers which shall be found useful, & paying for the material in the manufacture. These various manufactures, keeping up that of wrought nails, the Overseers expect will harmonize with each other, &, through their introduction will be attended with some expense, will, in the end, make the manufactory more respectable, more useful & less expensive to the State.

In the mean time, at a late meeting, the Overseers offered to give eight dollars hundred for coal, which they hope will spedily furnish the prison with a supply of that article, & to meet the additional expense, have raised the price of nails, as follows,

(Viz)	8 & long 8 ...wholesale ...	\$.0..	14
	10 & larger size... do.....		12.5
	2 rate..do.....do.....		10__
	3 rate..do.....do.....		8__

May, 1814

Wholesale 100 W^t & upward.

For retail price from 97 to 50 inclusive add...5

For under 50.....add another.....5

The Overseers have in the course of the year made a market for most the nails that remained on hand, amounting to the sum of nearly five thousand dollars

All which is submitted by your Honor's most Obed^t Serv^{ts}

John Treadwell
Pliny Hillyer
Samuel Woodruff

}

Overseers
of
New-Gate

Farmington 2 May
1814. - -

COND ARCHIVES
C8M 2ND SERIES
VOLI # 103