

OVERSEERS REPORTS

1823

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Granby, New Gate Prison, Feb. 14 1823

His excellency Oliver Wolcott:

Sir,

Yours of 28 Jan. directed to Martin Sheldon Esq. requesting various information of the Overseers relative to the convicts now confined in this prison &c has been rec-

Previous to the reception of your letter and in compliance with the solicitations of several gentlemen, in different parts of the State, I have partially prepared a statement, embracing most of the facts relating to the Convicts which, in your communication, you desire to have notice This being the case, the Overseers have faced the answering of that part of your inquiries to me

I have endeavored to collect such other particulars as were referred to, in your communication and were not contained in the statement alluded to above

I would remark, however, that the source from which I have drawn my information has been, in a few instances, from the prisoners themselves, and may not be, in every case, exactly correct. I trust it will not very far from the truth, and shall proceed to give such a statement as I presume in the main may be relied upon, and as will I hope comport with the wishes of your Excellency.

Hartford Feb 17 1823

His Excellency Oliver Wolcott

Sir

The Annexed Letter Contains An Answer to all the inquiries Made in Your Excellencies Communications to one of our Board under date of the 28<sup>th</sup> ? We have given the business, referred to, our particular attention & an entirely Satisfied that the Statements of Capt<sup>n</sup> Fuller are as Correct as the Nature of the Case will admit

Respectfully Your

?  
Martin Sheldon

Tho' K. Brace

Overseers  
NewGate  
Prison

Feb. 14, 1823

The average number of convicts, for each year, since I have had the charge of the Prison, has been as follows, viz:

|      |    |      |    |
|------|----|------|----|
| 1819 | 60 | 1821 | 63 |
| 1820 | 66 | 1822 | 90 |

The present number is 110 of whom 38 are Black's

Sentence for life, 6-for 18 Years, 1- for 14 Years, 1- 9 Yrs. 4- 7 Yrs. 1- 6 Yrs. 15-5 Yrs. 2- 4 Yrs. 80 3½ Yrs 2- 3 Yrs. 16- 2½ Yrs. 3- 2 Yrs. 27- 1½ Yr. 12- 15 Mo. 1- 1 Yr. 8- 6 Mo. 3.

Committed 2<sup>d</sup> time, 11-4<sup>th</sup> time, 1- The crimes for which they were sentenced together with the number for each crime annex. are as follows-For burglary, 54-Horsestealing 12-Forgery, 9-Passing Counterfeit money 8-Attempt of rape 7-Breaking in the day time, 4-Theft, 3-High crime & misdemeanor 2-Burglary & attempt to burn Gaol 2-Attempt to burn Gaol 2- Adultery, burglary, and arson 1-Bigamy, 1-Attempt to poison 1- Manslaughter 1-Highway robbery 1-Arson 1-and 1 for Rape

These are of the age of 20 Years and under 20-from 20 to 30, 55-30 to 40, 22-40 to 50, 8-50 to 60, 2- 60 to 70, 1- and 2 between 80 and 90 Years of age.

The places of their nativity as nearly as can be ascertained is as follows-

Natives of Connecticut, 50-R. Island, 12-N. York, 11-Mafs., 10- N. Jersey, 5-Vermont 2-N. Hampshire, 2-Penn. 1-S. Carolina 1- Ireland 6-England, 3-Africa, 2-Portugal, 1-Nova Scotia, 1- Rufsia, 1-Island of Corsica, 1-Island of Domingo, 1-

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Sentenced from Hartford County, 17-Middlesex, 49-N. Haven, 26-Fairfield, 21-Litchfield, 10-Windham, 10-N. London, 17-Tolland 2

Their former occupations according to their own account- 49 farmers-11 sailors-4 Tanners-3 Stone Cutters-5 servants- 3 Carpenters-3 shoemakers-2 Weavers-1 Printer-1 maker- 1 Cooper-1 Hatter, 1 Taylor-1 Machine maker-1 physician-1 pedlar-1 Mule spinner-1 Clothier-1 who has laboured in a ship Yard- and 19 who have prused various occupations from time to time.-

Present employment 28 Nailors-3 Black Smiths-20 shoe makers-10 Coopers 9 wheel wrights and machine makers-2 stone cutters-2 Basket makers-1 Taylor 8 Yard laborers- 5 Yard and shop waiters-2 Coal and water carriers-2 Cooks- 2 Washers 3 Invalids-2 old and infirm & 1 sick in Hospital 1 physician, who superintends the sick-3 in solitary confinement and 6 recently committed who have not yet been put to any particular buisnefs.

With regard to your inquiry, "whether some plan may not be adopted, by which the expences of the Establishment may be wholly defrayed by the product of the labor of the convicts" I would observe that the local situation of the prison, at a distance from any market the neccessary expences attending the transportation of stock and manufactured articles, the position and weaknefs of the walls and other parts of the prison, making it neccessary to employ a large number of guard, present a formidable obstacle to the accomplishment of such a plan--Another consideration which seems to militate against the expences being wholly defrayed

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by the labor of the prisoners, is, that most of them, when committed, ( as will appear by reference to the foregoing statements) are entirely ignorant of any mechanical business, and the sentences of a great proportion of them are too short for them to acquire a sufficient knowledge of any trade to render this labor profitable-For the above reasons, and others which might be mentioned, it is believed that the expences attendant upon the prison, cannot be met by the labor of the Convicts-Respecting the erection of a stepping Mill, I am fully persuaded of its utility. It would not only afford employment for a number of prisoners, who, in consequence of the shortness of their sentences, the increased number of the Convicts, and the narrow limits of the prison, cannot be otherwise usefully employed; but its effects in deterring from the commission of Crimes, and in correcting the habits of the indolent and refractory, who are already tenants of our prison, cannot be questioned.

The situation of the ground is well calculated for the purpose, and the location of the Prison, with reference to other mills is such as would undoubtedly secure a constant supply of Customers provided the mill should be a good one in addition to the necessary grinding for the prison-

The wheel may be so situated as to propel, at the same time a Grist mill and a Saw Mill, or other machinery

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The erection of such a machine, has been a subject of contemplation with me for some time past and I should be gratified if it could be carried into effect-

No exact calculation can be made with regard to expence of creating such an establishment, but I should suppose the probable expence of the necessary buildings and machinery to be something like \$3000 exclusive of what labor may be expected from the convicts-

You will not forget that all men are fallible and overlook all defects in this communication-

I am your Excellency's  
Most obedient and very  
humble serv't

Elam Tuller Prison Keeper

CONN HIST SOCIETY  
MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS  
L.S. T.P. GRABBY  
OLIVER WOLCOTT JR. PAPERS

To the Hon. General Assembly of the state of Connecticut, now in session at Hartford, in s<sup>d</sup> state;

The Overseers of New Gate prison respectfully beg leave to present the following report.

That the number of convicts in s<sup>d</sup> prison on the first day of January last was 99 - between that time and the present, the number has amounted to 112 - the number at present is 109 - making an increase since our last report of 42 - Six are under sentence for life - Eleven are committed for the second, and one for the fourth offence - About one third of the present number are blacks -

The following statement will exhibit the present employment of the convicts, viz: - 30 Nailers - 20 shoe makers - 11 waggon, machine, and plow makers - 8 Coopers - 4 stone cutters and masons - 2 sawyers - 3 Blacksmiths - 2 Cooks - 1 Washer - 4 shop and yard waiters - 1 Taylor - 1 Basket maker - 1 Coal and water carrier - 15 without trades, (fit subjects to be introduced to the Stepping Mill)- 2 sick - 1 Invalid - 3 old and infirm unable to labor - -

The convicts have, as usual, enjoyed a good state of health, the year past, no deaths having occurred among them -

The amount of stock, manufactured articles &c on hand on the first day of January last was - - - - - \$5723.36

Notes against sundry persons, amounting to 1979.09

Accounts due estimated at - - - - - 3030.58

Nails left by Overseers for sale - - - - - 1874.23

\$12,607.26

In consequence of the increased number of prisoners, and the want of room in the lodging apartments above ground, it has become necessary to lodge nearly half of them in the caverns - The rooms, or huts in the caverns, however, are in a decayed situation, and entirely incompetent in size and number, to afford comfortable quarters for those who are necessarily made to occupy them -

The Overseers would beg leave to state further, to your honors, that they have thought it advisable to deviate from the usual practice of exposing the rations for the prison to sale to the lowest bidder, and have taken upon themselves, in the capacity of Overseers, the business of furnishing the provisions, for the current year, by private contracts - This method, it is believed, while it enables them to procure rations of a better quality than have been usually furnished heretofore, will be attended with less expense to the



state, and will at the same time afford them an opportunity, in many instances of exchanging the articles manufactured at the prison for the necessary articles of provision -

In pursuance of the appropriation made at the last session of the Legislature, the Overseers have erected a store house, one hundred feet long by twenty one feet wide, having a cellar under the whole - And they would also observe that they had prepared an under-ground story to a building, about thirty six feet square, designed more particularly for storing the provisions, cider &c. for use of the prison, but, from the want of sufficient means concluded to defer its completion until the pleasure of your honors should be known respecting it -

As a number of the Officers, and Overseers of the several workshops have families (which will probably continue to be the case) and as it is extremely difficult for them to obtain accommodations for their families in the vicinity of the prison - The Overseers would respectfully suggest the propriety of erecting two or three small dwelling houses contiguous to the prison (provided a convenient site could be obtained) which, while they might be rented for a sufficient sum to indemnify the state for the expence, would very much contribute to the convenience of the persons above described -

Much might be said with regard to the defects in the present penitentiary system in this state, and the improbability of attaining, in the present situation of our State Prison, the end for which it was instituted

It can hardly be expected that young men, who have been unwarily drawn into the commission of crimes, for which they have received the sentence of the law, will improve much in their ideas of moral honesty, or be very likely to form resolutions of amendment, when thrown into the same rooms with old offenders, who take every opportunity of poisoning their mind, by instructing them in every species of vice -

What alterations may be made with a view to improve the discipline, convenience, or safety of the prison, is respectfully submitted to the wisdom of the Legislature by

Your Honors' most obedient  
and very humble servants

May 1823

Martin Sheldon } Overseers  
Tho K. Brace } Newgate  
Prison