

*“IN ESSENTIALS, UNITY;  
IN NON-ESSENTIALS,  
LIBERTY;  
AND IN ALL THINGS  
CHARITY”*



A Historical Account of  
The Mission of the Diocese of New York  
of the Protestant Episcopal Church  
To the Institutions and the Potter's Field on Hart Island

By Wayne Kempton,  
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2006

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## Preface

I first became interested in Hart Island while on a fishing trip out of City Island in 2004. The ruins of old buildings poking their heads from the shore of Hart Island begged the question, what had been on this now apparently vacant island? In 2005 the Archdeacon for Mission of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, the Ven. Michael S. Kendall, would introduce me to Melinda Hunt.

Melinda first became aware in 1991 of Hart Island, where the poor, unknown, and unwanted—mostly children—are buried in mass graves. These discoveries led Hunt to research and commemorate the history and stories of the island. This led to the 1998 publication of the book *Hart Island*, in collaboration with photographer Joel Sternfeld. We spoke about the sacredness of the place, and the difficulty individuals had in visiting it. The island is run by the New York City Corrections Department.

That piqued my interest. Had the Episcopal Church ever had a presence on the island? Did the Episcopal Church ever pray for those buried there? Searching the internet I found a wealth of material. Searching the diocesan archives I found even more.

On November 17, 2005 the Rt. Rev. Mark S. Sisk, 15<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, visited the Potter's Field on Hart Island. Accompanying him were Archdeacon Kendall and members of the advocacy group 'Picture the Homeless'. All were there to pray for and honor the hundreds of thousands of people who are buried there.

I soon learned from their web site that the interest of 'Picture the Homeless' in Hart Island was grounded in their belief that "all who pass from this life possess a sacred dignity intrinsic to their membership among the human family; and all consequently deserve to be reposed in dignity and remembered with honor." This is of course the belief of the church as well. And so my research project began.

The result of that research is found within these pages. There had been an active Episcopal ministry on Hart Island, both to the old public institutions that were once located there and to the Potter's Field. Many of these institutions were penal institutions, jails and reformatories. In fact the rugged cross monument found today on the Potters Field was erected by the City Mission Society of the Episcopal Diocese of New York in 1907.

The institutional chaplains who had served on the island in years past had an excellent working relationship with the Wardens and others in the Corrections Department at that time. Now as faith leaders work with that department to allow for a monthly interfaith service at the Potter's Field, and as they seek greater access to the site for mourners, I see that cooperative relationship once again developing.

The title for this work, *In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty and In All Things Charity*, is taken from an 1887 description by our Episcopal Chaplain to Bellevue Hospital of how chaplains from all faiths worked together at that post. It seemed a worthy moniker for this current effort as well.

Wayne Kempton  
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## **Introduction: A Genealogy of Hart Island in Pelham Manor**

First known as Lesser Minneford Island, Hart Island was included in the 9,166 acres that the Siwanoy Indians sold to Thomas Pell in 1654. Great Minneford is now known as City Island. The Minneford comes from the Indian word *minneweis*, said to have meant mulberry.

November 14, 1654 – Thomas Pell of Fairfield, Conn. made a treaty with the Indian Sachems for the land subsequently created into the Manor of Pelham. This treaty was signed under an oak tree, near a spring, known as the Treaty Oak, and was instigated by the Connecticut authorities with the object of extending their boundary westward. The grant was about eight miles square, beginning at the present bridge over East Chester River in Pelham Bay Park, running outside City Island and the adjacent islands in the Sound to Larchmont, thence inland and westward to the Hutchinson or East Chester River.

On October 6, 1666 “Richard Nicholls, Esq., Governor under His Royal Highness the Duke of York, of all his Territories in America” gave, granted and confirmed to Thomas Pell, Gentleman, all the land purchased from the Indian proprietors and created the same into an entire enfranchised township and manor.

On October 20, 1687 “Thomas Dongan, Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Province of New York...” to John Pell, Gentleman, nephew of Thomas Pell, confirmed the previous grant and constituted the Manor of Pelham. This patent gives, among other rights, the patronage of all and every church erected or to be erected within the boundaries of the Manor. Interestingly enough, John Pell’s father had been a Minister of the Church of England.

On September 20, 1689 John Pell conveyed to Jacob Leisler more than 6,000 acres of Pelham Manor. Leisler in turn released the land to exiled Huguenots; the area would soon be known as New Rochelle.

On March 24, 1693 an Act of the Assembly was passed by which the Manor of Pelham was made one of the four precincts of “Westchester parish”. Westchester Parish also included the towns of Westchester, Eastchester, and Yonkers as well. The first vestryman elected under this act for the parish, in 1702, was John Pell. The first minister of the Church of England assigned to the parish was the Rev. John Bartow. It would be a good many years before an “Episcopal church” would be erected in Pelham proper however. That distinction for “Westchester parish” would go to St. Peter’s Church in Westchester Square, St. Paul’s Church in East Chester and St. John’s in Yonkers first. A church in New Rochelle would soon follow.

The Pells still owned Hart Island on 28 March 1713 when John Pell (1644-c.1719), Second Lord of Pelham Manor, transferred both Minneford Islands to his son, Thomas Pell (c.1675-1739), later Third Lord of Pelham Manor. There is no registered deed by Thomas Pell selling the island. However, on 7 November 1775 Oliver Delancey, Esq. of New York City sold the 85 acres of Spectacle or Hart Island to Samuel Rodman of the Manor of Pelham, yeoman, for £550 (Westchester Co. Deeds 674:443). The island, described as one of the Minneford Islands, included buildings, orchards, fields and woodland. Samuel Rodman [Sr.] had married Mary Pell, granddaughter of John Pell.

At the time of the sale, the island was already in Samuel Rodman's possession because he and John Wooley of Great Neck, Queens County, had been leasing it from Delancey since 25 June 1755. That lease had contained a condition that Rodman and Wooley would transport Delancey over the Sound to and from the island. This must be a reference to the ferry established in 1755 by Samuel Rodman from Pelham Neck to Hempstead Harbor. Oliver Delancey, Esq. was a very wealthy Loyalist whose extensive land holdings were confiscated after the Revolutionary War and sold by the Commissioner of Forfeitures.

Samuel Rodman retained the island until his death, and passed half of it in his will to his eldest son, Joseph Rodman. Unfortunately, he neglected to say who was to inherit the other half of the island. In a lengthy recounting (Westchester Co. Deeds U:106) his other sons, William Rodman and Samuel Rodman Jr., maintained that they owned the other half because they had joined with their father and paid half of the £550 when he bought the island. Perhaps this was why Samuel did not mention the other half. William said he subsequently bought the share of Samuel Jr., but William's name wasn't on the deed and his half wasn't mentioned in his father's will, so he had no proof of title. Joseph was aware that William owned half the island. In a deed (not registered) dated 28 August 1780, Joseph agreed to sell William the half of the island that Joseph had received in their father's will.

Shortly thereafter, on 4 May 1781, Joseph leased the island to Benjamin Farranton and Samuel Norse for a term of three years, but when the lease ended Joseph moved back to the island and lived there until his death in 1792. His widow, Leah Rodman (later Leah Huestis), and his daughter, Mary (Rodman) Haight, wife of Nicholas Haight, were his only heirs. Leah had a right of dower that she relinquished 21 September 1802 after her remarriage. Mary and Nicholas Haight lived on the island until 6 January 1819 when they sold it to John Hunter [Sr.] for \$3,250 (Westchester Co. Deeds U: 106-112).

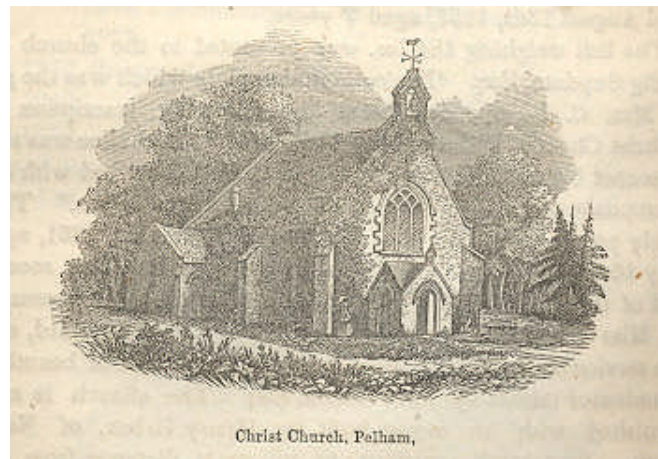
Besides the purchase of Hart Island, John Hunter [Sr.] bought farms on the nearby Pelham mainland, Hog Island (formerly known as Sheffield Island), and Hunter's Island (formerly known as Henderson's or Appleby's Island). It was on Hunter's Island that he built the mansion in which he lived in great style until his death in 1852. He left his son, Elias Debrosses Hunter, a life interest in many of his lands, but bequeathed the bulk of his estate to his grandson, John Hunter (Westchester Co. Wills 34:219-239). If grandson John, who lived on Bayard Farm near Throggs Neck, moved to Hunter's Island he was to inherit Hart Island and many other properties. If he stayed on Bayard Farm, Hart Island and the other properties could be sold and the proceeds divided equally among John and his three sisters.

One published work indicates that on Hunter Island there was a "lovely wooded game preserve". In fact the 1687 John Pell document above makes mention of the rights to "all...fishing, hawking, hunting and fowling..." These facts lend credence to the prevailing theory related to the origin of the name "Hart" as it applies to Hart Island. Hart is an expression for a stag, particularly a Red Deer stag past its fifth year. The Red deer is the largest mammal in Britain and has been there in some form or other since the island was joined to mainland Europe. It would be natural for the early English settlers to call a male deer a hart and some may have found their way to 'hart' island.

John did stay on Bayard Farm, where he raised race horses and became a founder and chairman of The Jockey Club. On 16 May 1868, as executor of his grandfather's will,

he sold to The Mayor, Aldermen and Commonalty of the City of New York “all that certain island called Hart Island surrounded by waters of Long Island Sound and in the Town of Pelham. . . .” for \$75,000 (Westchester Co. Deeds 674:447). The island had been expanded to 100 acres in size from the 85 acres of a century earlier. Three of the acres had been leased to the U.S. Army but the Army assigned their lease to the City of New York. To clear the title for the sale to the City, the deed acknowledged by Oliver Delancey in 1775 and a 1802 quitclaim from Joshua and Leah (—) (Rodman) Huestis were finally recorded on 27 May 1868, decades after the fact (Westchester Co. Deeds 674:443-6; 446).

Meanwhile, in 1840, the Rev. Robert Bolton, then rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Eastchester, extended his ministry to the town of Pelham. Bolton lived in Pelham and a parish was finally organized there with the cornerstone of a church laid on his own estate. The edifice was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Benjamin T. Onderdonk on September 15, 1843 by the name of Christ Church, Pelham.



Much of the material above came from three sources:

- (1) An article on the Genealogy of Hart Island by Anita A. Lustenberger, and originally published in *The NYG&B Newsletter*, summer 2000.
- (2) “The History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Westchester County” by the Rev. Robert Bolton 1855
- (3) “The Pell Manor”, a booklet published by the Order of Colonial Lords of Manors in America in 1917, it being an address by Captain Howland Pell delivered before the New York branch.





## **Part I: The Early Missionary Days on Hart Island**

In 1849 the Rev. Cornelius Winter Bolton, son of the Rev. Robert Bolton - Rector and founder of Christ Episcopal Church in Pelham Manor, Westchester County - came to City Island. A building known as the "Union Chapel" was secured "for the use of all denominations" there. In 1862, the Rev. Marmaduke M. Dillon Lee, then rector of Christ Church, in his parochial report found in the Episcopal Diocese of New York's Journal of Convention for that year, indicates that "a church is in the course of erection" on City Island. He reportedly held the first service on City Island on February 7, 1862. The church building was completed in 1863 and on October 13, 1863 Grace Church, City Island was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Horatio Potter, the Sixth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York.

In a timeline found on *correctionhistory.org*, the website of the New York City Department of Correction, we read that in 1863 on Hart Island the 25th Calvary mustered in during February, March, and April, the earliest known recorded mustering on the island of Union recruit units in the Civil War. Facilities on the island housed between 2,000 and 3,000 recruits and over 50,000 men were trained there.

By this time the Civil War was raging and many sick and wounded soldiers were cared for on David's Island. The ladies of Christ Church, Pelham participated in this ministry.

The first mention of missionary work on Hart Island appears in the Christ Church, Pelham parochial report found in the 1864 Journal of Convention.

"Hart Island, a military depot, with an average of 2,000 men upon it, is as yet unprovided with a Chaplain of its own; the Rector (then the Rev. Edward W. Syle) visits the post on Sunday afternoons, as often as weather and other circumstances will permit... Several ladies in the parish are unwearied in their attention to the sick and wounded soldiers in the Hospital on David's Island."

Again from the *timeline* we read that the 31st United States Colored Troops Regiment was organized on Hart Island during April 1864, one of New York State's three USCT regiments. The Hart Island regiment would see action at the fall of Petersburg on April 2, 1865. It would pursue Lee's army from April 3 through April 9 and be at Appomattox before, during and after the Confederate surrender on April 9, 1865. . . In November, 1864, construction began for barracks on Hart Island to house Confederate POWs. The final prison established by the Union for Confederate soldiers opened on Hart Island in April of 1865, a month before the Civil War came to an end yet 235 POWs perished there. Within three weeks of its opening, 3,413 POWs are crammed into the post's tiny enclosed area. Hart does not become completely cleared of prisoners until July. Within the four months of its operation, nearly 7 percent of all the camp's POWs died.

In his 1865 report Fr. Syle writes that “Hart Island, a military rendezvous, where large numbers of soldiers are constantly to be found, has no Government Chaplain. The Rev. Wm. Feltwell (then Asst. Minister at Christ Church) visits the post diligently, and for a few weeks held one of the regimental chaplaincies.”

By 1866 Fr. Syle reports that City Island had been organized into a separate parish with the Rev. Feltwell elected as Rector. “The important post at Hart Island is included in the bounds of the new parish” he wrote.

Another early mention of the presence of a minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church on Hart Island appears in a New York Times article dated June 2, 1865. The heading of the article reads, “The Rebel Prisoners at Hart’s Island”. The text of the article appears in full below.

“At Hart’s Island yesterday, the day was observed in the prison camp by the suspension of the rules requiring marching for exercise, and by religious services in the forenoon, conducted by the Rev. Robert Lowry, Chaplain U. S. A. He was invited by General Wessells at the suggestion of the prisoners themselves, who had seen the President’s proclamation for a day of humiliation and prayer, and wished to observe it. Nearly 2,000 of them were gathered in the centre of the grounds, which cover four and a half acres, and gave good attention to the preaching and prayers, and joined in the singing. After the exercises several pressed forward to shake hands with the Chaplain; they had known him when they were prisoners in David’s Island Hospital. Several of the squads also held prayer meetings at 8 a. m. and in the evening. The papers, hymn books, tracts, and testaments, of which a liberal supply have been placed in their hands by the agents of the American Tract Society, and are very much prized, and will mostly be preserved and taken home with them. Whether sitting within their comfortable barracks or outside, or walking around the ground, many are constantly reading these. They hope soon to be sent home. The hospital is located in a fine airy position outside the camp.”

The Rev. Robert Lowry is listed in the 1865 and 1866 Journal of Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York as Chaplain U. S. V. and Missionary.

But what do we know of the history of the Potter’s Field in New York City? Again we turn to the web site of the Department of Correction of the City of New York, [correctionhistory.org](http://correctionhistory.org).

“The City of New York has undertaken the responsibility of laying to rest the bodies of those in the City who died indigent or unbefriended, since the early part of the 19th century, when they were interred at Washington Square in Greenwich Village. In 1823, these remains were removed to Fifth Avenue and 40 - 42 Streets, Manhattan. When this site was selected for a reservoir, the remains were again removed to Fourth Avenue and 50th Street, this ground being later granted to the Women’s Hospital. In 1857, the remains of 100,000 paupers and strangers were transferred to Ward’s Island, 75 acres of which were allocated for this purpose.”

A short article appearing in the October 3, 1866 issue of an Episcopal Church publication known as *The Church Journal* relates the following: “the Bishop (Horatio Potter) for the first time in the course of his Episcopate consecrated a cemetery. It is on Ward’s Island, and is intended for the poor.” The consecration took place the day before.



It was only a couple of years later that Hart Island became the home of the City Cemetery known as “The Potter’s Field”. It is said that on April 20, 1869 Louisa Van Slyke, an orphan who died alone in Charity Hospital at the age of 24, became the first to be buried there.

An article in the New York Times dated February 1, 1874 and titled, “Where the Unknown Dead Rest”, tells the tale of the Potter’s Field on Hart Island this way:

“Between Bellevue Hospital and Hart’s Island there is carried on weekly a ghastly, if necessary traffic. Once, or sometimes twice a week in Winter, and three or four times a week in Summer, a steamer leaves the wharf at the end of 26<sup>th</sup> Street, East River, with a freight consisting of the unknown and unclaimed dead of a great City. Those poor waifs and strays of humanity had a melancholy ending. They went out of the world without any friendly solicitude concerning them and public charity accords to them the decencies of burial...A new steamer has recently been commissioned for these melancholy voyages. She is named the Fidelity...The number buried during this season averages 50 per week, of which about half are grown persons. Their deaths came about in many ways...Some were found drowned in the rivers, others died of cold, exposure, or starvation, some made an ending in a public hospital, many were suicides, a considerable number of them were abandoned children; but at all events, from whatever cause they came by their deaths, nearly all died friendless.”

Meanwhile, the missionary work to the Public Institutions for the poor in the City of New York was the charge of the Protestant Episcopal Mission Society. It was incorporated in 1833 “to provide, by building, purchase, hiring, or otherwise, at different points in the City of New York, churches in which the seats shall be free, and mission houses for the poor and afflicted; and also to provide suitable clergyman to act as missionaries and assistants in and about the said churches and mission houses.” After the field at first marked out had been so successfully occupied, the City Mission Society was led to take up the public institutions of the City and adjacent islands, and minister to the thousands and thousands found there.

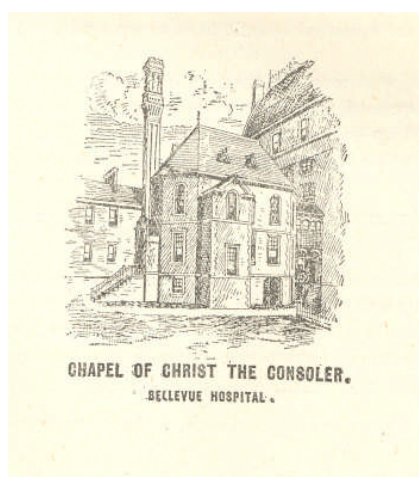
By 1875 the City Mission Society had seven clergy in their employ. Their fields of labor ranged from Bellevue and Roosevelt Hospitals to the Tombs and other Jails and Homes around the City. Two of the missionaries were positioned on the islands; the Rev. William G. French on Blackwell’s Island served the Alms House, Lunatic Asylum, Workhouse, Penitentiary and the Charity Hospital there; the Rev. V. Van Roosbroeck served at Bellevue Hospital and at the Hospital and Lunatic Asylum on Ward’s Island.

Each year the City Mission Society would publish an annual report. Included in the appendix to this report were the detailed reports of the work of each of their missionaries. Written by the missionaries themselves, these reports often ran several pages. They provide a wonderful first person account of the conditions at their stations. We will be reproducing some of these reports on the following pages.

It would still be several years before this Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society would be called to Hart Island.

In the appendix to the 1877 annual report of the Protestant Episcopal Missionary Society we find a mention of the Potter's Field in the report of the Rev. P. T. V. Van Roosbroeck, missionary to Bellevue Hospital. He reports as follows:

"And what words of praise shall I bestow on the ladies of the "Guild of St. Elizabeth", who have taken up that most needful and holy work, of giving a decent burial to the sick of our communion who die in the Hospital. *It is the greatest of all Christian work to bury those who belong to us in a decent Christian manner, in a consecrated ground, and not allow them to be sent to Potter's field.*" Clearly the impression is made that the Potter's Field is not a desirable place of burial.



In that same year the Rev. William G. French, missionary on Blackwell's Island (now Roosevelt Island) with regard to his work at the Alms House reports,

"Traveling down the Island, we come upon the Alms House, filled, as are the rest, with the children of the Romish Church, chiefly Irish, with a sprinkling of Germans. Little change has taken place in the past year, except in an increase of numbers, and the true condition of things is hardly made known by this statement; for the other Islands, and chiefly Hart's Island, are made the receptacles of the overflow of the poor of every sort, sent away from Blackwell's Island, a few only returning to the city. The death rate has been greater for the past nine months than for the same period in the previous year. In 1876, there were 142 deaths; in 1877, there were 174."

"In regard to one of the evils of which I have spoken in former reports, we are in a fair way to see the end, through the Christian feeling and energy of the "Guild of St. Elizabeth," viz.: the unchristian way of treating the Christian dead. It is an undertaking which needs to be, and ought to be, vigorously sustained by our Church out of love to Christ's departed children, and also to maintain our claim to primitive Faith in the blessed resurrection of the dead. *To allow our Christian brethren to have only the "burial of an ass" is a reproach to this generation of churchmen.* To Christian women belongs the honor of taking the first action in this blessed work. The "Guild" engages to furnish burial robes and coffin, and a conveyance to, and a grave in, St. Michael's Cemetery in Astoria. At my suggestion they provided a pall, and a hearse to be drawn by hand, so that decency in the burial of the poor who die in Christ may show our belief in something yet to come to the bodies of our Christian dead."

An extremely long and detailed article entitled, “In the Potter’s Field” appeared in the New York Times on March 3, 1878. The excerpt below speaks to the feelings of the poor about the Potter’s Field.

“The people housed in the Institutions on Blackwell’s Island, particularly the old men and women, seem to know what freight the steamboat (Fidelity) carries under the big black sheets of oil cloth, and to shrink back into darker shaded corners and press away from the river banks and look with terror and awe at the big black heap upon the forward deck. Some of their friends are there; some of the friends with whom, perhaps a week ago they chatted...The next time the boat goes up they may make a part of this black cargo. They know it and shrink away.”

But there was more than a Potter’s Field on Hart’s Island. By 1883 Episcopal missionaries were assigned to two institutions on Hart Island, they being the “Hart’s Island Hospital for Chronic and Convalescent Cases” and the “Female Branch of the New York City Lunatic Asylum”. Fr. French appears to have handled some of this work in addition to his duties on Blackwell’s Island. In his 1884-1885 annual report he speaks directly to the issue of Christian burial.

“It is a hopeful sign of progress in this Apostolic and primitive work that young ladies and children of some city parishes are becoming interested in these labors of love. It is an immense pleasure to the old people to receive anything from a young person’s hands, and to hear their voices in song.”

“The Guild of St. Elizabeth continues their beneficent Christian work of burying the dead. The limit put to this work by the want of adequate means (\$11 only for each burial) leads us to ask why the Episcopal Church of New York City, so abundant in all good works to all worthy objects, should be so lacking in this. We esteem the body of the departed Christian sacred as the temple of the Holy Ghost, to be raised at the coming of CHRIST, to enjoy with the soul a fadeless inheritance. The old man and the infant of days she lays to rest with the same words of comfort and triumphant faith in a resurrection. Are not the bodies of her dead poor of the same value in the LORD’S sight, as the bodies of the rich? Why not bury them in her consecrated ground? Why a pauper burial?”

*“The old hand-dray of years past still carries the bodies to the filthy dead-house for dissection; and thence to the dock; thence by boat to the Morgue, and the Potter’s Field on Hart’s Island.”*

“We have had a churchly pall for several years, the gift of Christ Church while in charge of Dr. Ewer of blessed memory; it is useless without a hand-hearse. I was asked once by a wealthy churchman what the cost would be, but nothing came of it.”

*“It is no small drawback to the work and the influence which the Christian religion ought to have upon the poor, to have this ignoble ending up of a sad and distressed life constantly before their eyes. For as a man said, “In what respect is it worth while to be a Christian, if, after this life of misery here, I must be cut up and buried like a dead dog; and Christians, who profess to be my brethren, do not care enough for me to give me a decent burial. I am poor, but I have never been a criminal.”*

An article in the New York Times dated December 29, 1885 tells us a little bit more about the Guild of St. Elizabeth.

“The Guild of St. Elizabeth, a society organized for charitable work in Bellevue Hospital

and on Blackwell's, Ward's and Hart's Island, has submitted its annual report. A plea is made for continued contributions to the little funds which fall so far short of meeting the constant demands upon them. Subscriptions to the almshouse, Charity Hospital, Hart's Island, and lunatic funds amounted to \$501.05, of which, after purchases of tea, sugar, and medicine, a balance of \$12.57 remained.... Contributions of clothing, old linens, and delicacies for the sick will be gratefully received by the Rev. W. G. French, Charity Hospital, Blackwell's Island....Among the donors were the Girls' Friendly Society and the Ladies Society of Corning, N. Y., the St. Stephen's Aid Society, the Trinity Chapel Mothers' Aid Society, Cornelius Vanderbilt, the Rev. Morgan Dix, the Rev. C. T. Woodruff, the Rev. C. B. Smith, Mrs. W. H. Aspinwall, and Mrs. B. de Peyster."

In 1886 Fr. French continues his work and reports on "burials" as follows:

*"The burial of the Alms House dead is a sad business, at best. It is not surprising that even the unbelieving inmates who look forward to death should have a horror of the surgeon's knife, and the "Potter's Field."; how much more they who believe their bodies to be "The Temples of the Holy Ghost," incorruptible in their corruption, immortal in their mortality."*

"It is pitiful to hear their prayers for a Christian burial, by the Guild of St. Elizabeth, whose efforts in their behalf are now so well known in the institutions."

"These ladies receive the blessings of many poor Christians, as they richly deserve the honor of their decent burial. They have placed the Episcopal Church in the foremost rank of Benefactors of the poor."

"They began their good work in 1877. In that year two were buried, in St. Michael's Cemetery, Astoria. In 1878, four; in 1879, five; in 1880, fifteen; in 1881, seventeen; in 1882, seven; in 1883, eleven; in 1884, sixteen; in 1885, seven."

"It is impossible to measure the influence of this work upon the minds and hearts of the multitudes that sicken and die on the Islands, and on the larger multitudes that see so prominent and so blessed a work done for the poor in Christ's name."

By 1886 the Field of Labor of the Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society had expanded considerably. Fourteen clergymen were then in their employ. The Superintendent of Mission Work was the Rev. Alexander Mackay-Smith, Archdeacon of New York.

To better understand the field of labor covered by this Protestant Episcopal Mission Society what follows is a list of the clergy in their employ ca 1886, along with their assignments.

- Rev. ALEXANDER MACKAY-SMITH, Archdeacon of New York, Superintendent of Mission Work.
- Rev. WM. G. FRENCH, Missionary to the Alms-House and the Lunatic Asylum for Women, on Blackwell's Island; address, 332 East Eighty-Fourth Street.
- Rev. J. G. B. HEATH, Missionary to the Tombs, Prisons, Homes, etc.; address, 172 East Seventy-Fourth Street.
- Rev. N. F. LUDLUM, Financial Agent and Special Missionary; address, City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.
- Rev. G. W. MAYER, Missionary to Charity Hospital and to the Germans at the Alms -House on Blackwell's Island; address, Charity Hospital.

- Rev W. B. HOOPER, Missionary to the Penitentiary and the Work House on Blackwell's Island; address, City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.
- Rev. T. C. WILLIAMS, M.D., Missionary in charge of St. Barnabas Chapel, Doctor in charge of Dispensary; address and residence, City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.
- Rev. HENRY ST. GEORGE YOUNG, Missionary to Bellevue Hospital, Gouverneur Hospital and the New York Infant Asylum; address Bellevue Hospital.
- Rev. JAMES JAMIESON, Missionary to the Homeopathic and Emigrant Hospitals on Ward's Island; address, City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.
- Rev. EDWARD C. HOSKINS, Missionary to the Ophthalmic and Harlem Reception Hospitals and the New York Home for Convalescents.
- Rev. GEORGE MONROE ROYCE, Missionary to St. Ambrose Church; address, City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.
- REV. CHARLES A. WENMAN, Missionary to Institutions on Randall's Island, Lunatic Asylum (Male) on Ward's Island, Lunatic Asylum (Female) and Branch Work-House on Hart's Island; address, No. 1614 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn.
- Mr. F. U. HUTTON, Missionary and Visitor among the French, working in connection with Church Du St. Esprit.
- Mr. D. A. SHOU SHIN, Chinese Missionary and Bible Reader, working in connection with the Chinese Sunday School Association.

The annual report of 1886-1887 saw one additional institution listed on Hart Island, that being a "Branch of the Work-House". Fr. French reported that "*As to the Potter's Field, as now kept, the poor's portion will compare favorably with other cemeteries. The Commissioners deserve great praise for this part of their charge.*"

Also in 1886 the Rev. Charles A. Wenman was appointed Missionary to Randall's, Ward's and Hart's Island. In his 1886-1887 annual report he refers to Hart's Island as "the most remote portion of my field." Although rather long, his detailed report on Hart's Island follows in full.

"This island lies out in Long Island Sound, about seventeen miles distant from the city. It is reached by steamer, running up every week day from the foot of Twenty-Sixth Street. It is my custom to spend here six days and four nights in each month, including the time consumed in making the trip to and fro, leaving on Saturday morning, and reaching home again on Monday evening. A suitable and comfortable room is provided me at this point also."

"The institutions on this island are the Branch Work-House for male prisoners committed for short terms, the Branch Lunatic Asylum for females, mostly chronic cases, the Hart's Island (male) Hospital and the Department, for Insane Men, being a branch of the City Asylum on Ward's Island. Until recently there was also a Hospital for females, comprising three pavilions; but this has now been broken up, the patients transferred down to the Homeopathic Hospital, and the pavilions filled up to accommodate the late ingress of insane women, transferred from Ward's Island. This class of patients now number, all told, about one thousand. A new, beautiful and commodious two-story pavilion of brick, for these people, erected at large expense, was completed a few months ago. Nine separate pavilions for the insane, four of which are very fine, are now



occupied.”

“While the attendance at our chapel service is altogether voluntary on the part of these afflicted women, yet they gladly avail themselves of the privilege. Some of them have excellent voices, and sing with enthusiasm. The chapel is most always well filled.”

“At every place of worship in my field, excepting on Ward’s Island, I am obliged to lead the singing myself; the tune is readily caught up, since I select, if possible, old, familiar airs, such as “Old Hundred,” and the like, occasionally substituting for less familiar airs certain “Gospel Hymns” which are universally known, such as, “Shall We Gather at the River?” These are sung with a great deal of gusto.”

“On week-days it is my practice to enter the different pavilions where the insane are confined, and converse with them cheerfully, as far as practicable. Some are very loquacious, while many of them have little or nothing to say, while engaged in brooding over their real or imagined wrongs.”

“The insane men are, through the week-days, kept steadily at manual labor.”

“At the other end of the Island, the “Upper Landing,” are located the Branch Work House and the Hart’s Island Hospital. The prisoners of the Work House, when not engaged in labor, are confined in seven separate buildings or “dormitories,” some of which are able to accommodate from 80 to 100 men. On Sunday mornings I enter each one of these dormitories, notify of our ensuing church service, and invite the men to be present. This painstaking attention has been abundantly rewarded by reciprocity on their part; for by going to them, they are induced to come to me, or rather to the Lord in the courts of His house, Their orderly behavior is excellent, and their attention to the service quite as good as that of any average congregation outside. At the close of the service I usually distribute to them religious papers or tracts; and also afford to any who may desire, an opportunity to confer with me on matters affecting their spiritual or temporal interests. Convalescing patients from the male hospital, and Work House women from the laundry, also attend this service.”

“In the afternoon, I go to the “Lower Landing,” and officiate for the insane women already alluded to; after which it is my custom to return to the “Hill,” and administer Holy Communion to the sick in the male hospital wards. The number of recipients is from five to nine.”

“Our Public Communion in chapel is celebrated once in two months.”

“The hospital wards are systematically visited, and prayers held with the sick, while the pillows of the dying are smoothed with the consolation of our holy religion. In these ministrations, I have had several touching experiences illustrating the power of Divine grace. But in addition to our clerical work proper, we missionary chaplains are called upon to do numerous and various favors for the islanders—a large number of letters to write, many commissions to execute in the way of bearing messages to relatives in the city, and in endeavoring to reconcile alienated members of families, etc., etc. Often these requests are so numerous, that it is out of the question to give attention to them all. Indeed, some of them are not deserving of attention, while others of them we feel in duty and in conscience bound to regard. They have to be brought to the bar of our judgment and discrimination. Active work of this sort involves time, travel and expense.”

“Both on Hart’s and Randall’s Islands, we have libraries which are doing a blessed work in entertaining and edifying the unfortunates, and in helping to relieve their laborious or tedious hours.”

“The State Charities’ Aid Society has kindly furnished many books, magazines and daily papers, as well as binding material.”

“The ladies of the New York Bible and Fruit Mission make monthly visitations to the

hospitals, always bringing with them good cheer, not only in the way of spiritual sustenance, but also in distributing to the patients delicacies and refreshments to break the monotony of their ordinary diet.”

“Credit to this effect must likewise be given to the good ladies of the St. George Society.”

*“The Potter’s Field, more properly called the City Cemetery, is located on Hart’s Island. That morbid dread which possesses many of the poor, of being laid within its precincts, is often felt by visitors to be foolish and unfounded, when they view for the first time its pleasing appearance, the good order in which it is kept, with the thrifty grass blooming over the mansions of the dead.”*

“With all the officials of the islands, I have, from the first, been on the best of terms. They have always treated me with courtesy and kindness, and have ever stood ready to facilitate my labors in every way within their power.”

Some sacramental burial records for many of the City Mission Society chaplains may be found in the Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. These books are collections of submission forms pasted together in each volume. The earliest records that show some entries indicating the Potter’s Field or the City Cemetery as the place of burial of the deceased are in four volumes covering the period 1887 – 1901. Oddly enough we do not find any entries submitted by Fr. Wenman here.

◀New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society▶  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

—BURIAL—

*the Rehearsal of the*  
DATE OF BURIAL, *Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1887.*

FULL NAME, *Franklin Newton (color)*

DATE OF DEATH, *Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup> 1887.*

AGE, *10 days.*

PLACE OF BURIAL, *Hart’s Island*

OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *G. V. Hayer.*

Place of the Service, *Charity Hospital.*

◀New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society▶  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

—BURIAL—

DATE OF BURIAL, *July 18 - 1887*

FULL NAME, *Sarah Matson*

DATE OF DEATH, *July 18.*

AGE, *100.*

PLACE OF BURIAL, *St Michael’s - Astoria*

OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *Rev. M. G. French*

«New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society»  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

—BURIAL—

DATE OF BURIAL, *Dec 28<sup>th</sup> 1887*  
FULL NAME, *Maggie Meland*  
DATE OF DEATH, *Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> 1887.*  
AGE, *1 day*  
PLACE OF BURIAL, *Potters Field*  
OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *J. H. K. [Signature]*

«New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society»  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

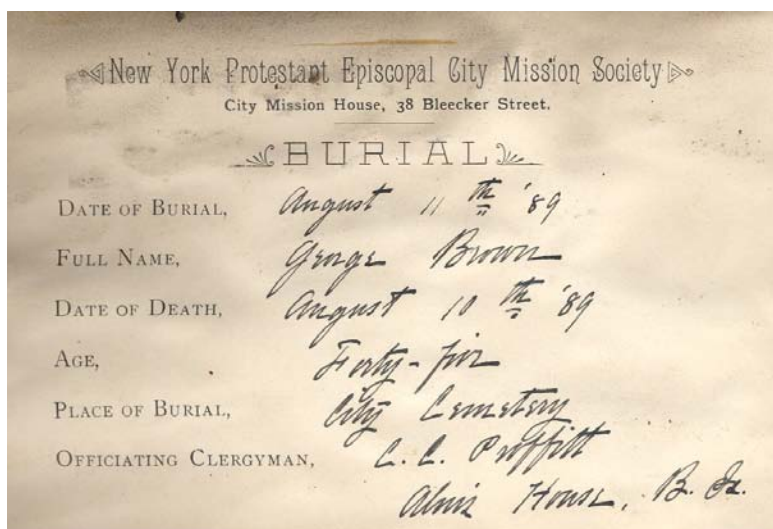
—BURIAL—

DATE OF BURIAL, *Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1888*  
FULL NAME, *Harriet Kingsbury*  
DATE OF DEATH, *22<sup>nd</sup> February 1888*  
AGE, *66 years*  
PLACE OF BURIAL, *Potters Field*  
OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *J. C. Williams M.D.*  
*Chaplain Homeopathic Hospital*  
*W. Island*

«New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society»  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

—BURIAL—

DATE OF BURIAL, *Oct. 3, 1888.*  
FULL NAME, *Christina Barnett.*  
DATE OF DEATH, *Oct. 3, 1888.*  
AGE, *58 years -*  
PLACE OF BURIAL, *Potters Field.*  
OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *Edw. C. Hoskins.*



The missionary to Bellevue Hospital, in his 1887-1888 annual report writes most dramatically about how well the ministers of the various denominations work together in their field of labor.

Do all Christian Agencies in the hospital work in love and harmony? Yes. And we are happy to think that the legend on every worker's heart is,

*"LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE," our rule was being, "IN ESSENTIALS, UNITY; IN NON-ESSENTIALS, LIBERTY; AND IN ALL THINGS CHARITY."*

Continuing with the annual reports of the Rev. Chas. A. Wenman for Hart's Island we read:

- Branch Work-House 1887-1888

1. Present census, 175 men, 22 women: total number of admissions for one year (men only) 1,269 giving an average monthly Census of 106 men.

"For reasons easy of explanation the number of commitments is always lighter during the summer months. At the approach of winter the Census largely increases. Some, in their destitution, commit themselves for a temporary home and others (to their credit) as a place of refuge from their great enemy and tyrant, strong drink."

"The men are put to various kinds of labor. In the summer season they are largely engaged in cultivating the soil, which is very rich and productive, they plough, they plant, they hoe; and in due time gather in a bountiful harvest of beets, onions, carrots and other vegetables. For several years past, the Warden has been carrying out a project of increasing the territory of the island by widening it at the neck or isthmus which connects the two ends of the island. For this purpose barges of refuse ashes are sent up from the city and dumped into the water inside of the "crib" in order to make the new land. To

unload these ashes from the barges and to dump them, is the work assigned to large numbers of the prisoners in the late fall and winter. For sanitary reasons this work is discontinued during the warm months. *Numbers of the work-house men are also employed at the Cemetery, in opening the trenches and burying the city's friendless dead.* Twice each month I sail out to this island to do what good I can to these men charged with petty crimes, and to assemble them together for Divine Worship; to which invitation I believe the Protestant men very generally respond. Having "done their time," they often have not decent clothing with which to go out and begin the world again: so they appeal to their minister, who gives them a note to our P. E. City Mission Society, which will always do for them, in the way of clothing, what lies in its power. The work-house women are employed at laundry work, and as cooks and waitresses."

"All of these unfortunate people have access to a good library of books and magazines, for which I must duly thank the Book and Newspaper Committee of the State Charities Aid Association, as well as for the daily papers which they regularly send up. And, while on this subject of reading matter, I desire to express my obligations to the N. Y. Prot. Episcopal City Mission Society for the abundance of religious and miscellaneous papers which it has furnished to me for distribution: and also especially for the twenty-five copies of the Parish Visitor per month, kindly procured from the Evangelical Knowledge Society. In my own humble opinion no better practical and devotional paper than the Parish Visitor, has ever been published. It is singularly adapted for circulation in our public institutions; because, being not controversial or sectarian, it can also be read by the large percentage of Roman Catholics, not only without offence, but with positive gain and benefit to their spiritual life."

"My Hart's Island men appreciate the monthly visits of this friend and counselor."

- Branch Lunatic Asylum 1887-1888

2. Census 1,087, of which 875 are women, and 212 are men.

"These patients, with very few exceptions, are chronic cases; and may be said to be incurably insane, though there is considerable difference among them as to the degree of their malady. They are distributed among twelve pavilions, one of which is used as a hospital ward for the sick. Quite a number of the women are put to sewing, knitting and darning, which they do very nicely, while many have not sufficient reason to engage in any work at all."

"Save in stormy weather, they are exercised out once or twice daily, being marched in procession, two by two, around the lower end of the island."

"Beside the male physicians in attendance, a competent, trained female doctor or "doctress," is now stationed on the island to look after the physical health of the female lunatics."

"The insane men are put to various kinds of labor (mainly outdoor) adapted to their sex."

"Both the men and women who have sufficient self-control to preserve order, are brought out to my afternoon service; to be present at which appears to be genuine pleasure and recreation to them. The attendance usually ranges from eighty to one hundred."

"I have been in the habit from time to time of going into all the pavilions and holding with the patients such friendly intercourse as the nature of the case will admit of. Here also I give special attention to the sick in the hospital pavilion; and frequently observe an



appreciation of the prayers held with them.”

- Branch Work-House and Reformatory 1888-1889

Present Census: 206 men, 24 women; total, 230; Total admissions for one year, 1,142.

“It is the plan and purpose of the present Warden to make this a reformatory as well as a penal institution; and to have its inmates consists mainly of young men whose character and habits may be more easily molded for the better. Accordingly, he has established for their benefit a night school where they may be drilled in the branches of a common education.”

“At my semi-monthly service here I have been always favored with the presence of the good Warden and his family, to whom I am much indebted for the leading and support of our church music, both vocal and instrumental. But this mention reminds your missionary of the pleasurable duty of again expressing the most profound thanks to the State Charities Aid Association for the noble gift of a superb cabinet organ, worth \$180, having thirteen stops, and manufactured by Messrs. Mason & Hamlin.”

“From what combination of causes we will not attempt to explain, yet it is ‘a cheering fact’ that of late my congregations at the Branch Workhouse have been largely on the increase, yes, are literally double the size they were. Undoubtedly the new organ and more attractive music have been potent factors in the result.”

“Every Sunday at 2 P.M. Warden Stocking also assembles the men in chapel. Their coming is optional; but as this is not a gathering for worship, they turn out irrespective of creed. Usually there are as many as two-thirds of the (male) Workhouse present.”

“The object of this convocation is to inculcate the duty and desirability of temperance, or rather of total abstinence from intoxicants. Accordingly, temperance Hymns and songs are sung. What a volume of voice proceeds from these men as they are supported by our new organ. The Warden talks to them in a familiar way on the evils of intemperance, and reads to them, telling facts on the subject, and also talks on other subjects of current interest.”

“Your missionary is always present at these gatherings from a desire to uphold the Warden’s hands in the noble work he has undertaken, and on a standing invitation to address the men I quite often respond. Able speakers are sometimes brought from the city and other localities. Declamations and readings are delivered by the school children of the island. In a word, everything is done to keep the prisoners interested. Finally, opportunities are afforded to these unfortunate men (especially on the eve of the expiration of their terms) to sign the pledge, either for a limited time, or else for life.”

“Two hundred new books of temperance and sacred songs have been kindly donated by the Island Mission for the Warden’s purposes; these books are used on above occasions.”

- Branch Lunatic Asylum 1888-1889

Present census: 1,167 (955 women, 212 men).

“The female census has been increased by the transfer of eighty women from the sister asylum below (on Blackwell’s Island). For the benefit of these unfortunate people I hold a semi-monthly service in the afternoon, to attend which certainly affords pleasure to the more tractable cases (who are alone admitted), and, to say the least, helps to break up the monotony of their lives. And from many evidences it is certain that not a few of them are benefited spiritually, for they manifest devotion in their singing and responses. At the

conclusion of Divine service, some of them, at times, approach the missionary to express their appreciation of the discourse or address. God will bless His own agencies to the edification of even the demented, and will fulfill the promise that "His word shall not return unto Him void." But *the dilapidated frame pavilion at this end of the island used as a place of worship, is a wretched place indeed in many respects, and has for a long time been complained of by both Protestants and Roman Catholics, who use it in common.* But we have cause to rejoice in the hope of better things to come, since our energetic superintendent, the Archdeacon, in his late visit to the island, happily looked the situation over and virtually gave us the assurance that, if possible, in due time a Protestant Episcopal chapel shall grace the territory of Hart's Island. This goodly prospect seems to afford general delight, and the Medical Superintendent himself (though not of our persuasion) is more than pleased at the idea, and will gladly do what in him lies to promote the good work. His suggestion we think an excellent one, viz., to locate the new chapel in a central position, midway between the two landings, in order that it may afford a common place of worship both for the Branch Workhouse and the Branch Lunatic Asylum, which at present (as aforesaid) worship in separate chapels."

- Branch Work-House and Reformatory 1889-1890

Present census: men, 158; women, 20; total, 178; admissions (both sexes) for one year, 1,105

"To this remote island I have made a missionary visit twice a month, remaining on the island six days and four nights monthly."

"The Reformatory, under its devoted warden, is making steady progress, and exerting a constant influence for good upon all of its inmates, without respect to creed. Through the kindness of Mr. Montague Marks, the warden has secured a printing-press, through which facility he publishes and edits a semi-monthly paper, entitled "Sprays from the Sound." This little paper is devoted to the interests of temperance reform, and to Hart's Island news. Its subject-matter is also calculated to promote general morality and piety; and it doubtless has had a most healthful influence upon its readers in this school of reform. The better educated of the inmates are always invited to contribute to its columns; and many most creditable articles, in the line of both poetry and prose, have emanated from their pens."

"In years past, the one serious drawback to the moral improvement of men committed to the Branch Work-house has been the system of herding them together in barracks or dormitories containing from 40 to 70 men each, the youthful offender and the more hardened transgressor, without discrimination. To this state of things protest was made by the former warden and others. But the time was not then ripe for the desired change."

"In removing this great obstacle in the way of reforming manners and morals, Warden Stocking has taken the initiatory step for the division of the dormitories into separate rooms or cells. By this excellent arrangement the more vicious will not be able to corrupt the young and comparatively innocent, who, by enforced seclusion in non-working hours, can enjoy much better opportunities for reading, for reflection and, perchance, for prayer. By the praiseworthy liberality of a Christian lady, one of these dormitories has already been divided off into separate compartments; and the warden has made application to the Board of Commissioners to have the rest of them likewise divided, which application has been favorably considered, and (we believe) will be acted upon at no distant day."

"From time to time a list is furnished me, from the office, of the new Protestant comers

since my last visit to the island; these men I talk with face to face, and try to interest them in our Church service, inviting them to be regular attendants during their term of imprisonment. Beside my regular service in the morning, I have never failed to be present at the warden's temperance meeting in the afternoon, at which (on standing invitation) I have almost always had something to say or to read to the assembled inmates."

*"The chapel at this end of the island is a commodious one, and well adapted to purposes of assembly and worship; through the action of the warden, it has undergone much improvement by the raising of its ceiling, by fresh and tasty painting within and without, etc."*

In November 1890 an article appeared in the *Mission News of the Archdeaconry*, a monthly publication of the City Mission Society. Titled "A Bird's Eye View of the Work of the City Mission", a short paragraph concerning Hart's Island is reproduced below.

"On Hart's Island are the Branch Work House and Reformatory...This island is at the opening of the Sound. Execution Rock is just opposite the southern point of the island, and City Island lies about a mile away to the southwest. To this island, our missionary, the Rev. Mr. Wenman, makes a visit twice every month, remaining Saturday noon until Monday noon. The Warden, Rev. Dr. Stocking, says that he is more isolated here than when he was a missionary in the interior of Persia. With a printing press, he edits and prints a little paper called "Sprays from the Sound"; and creditable contributions to its columns have frequently been made by inmates."

- Branch Lunatic Asylum 1889-1890.

Present census: females, 1,100; males, 212; total, 1,312.

"I have here conducted our Church missionary service (as compiled for the admirable leaflet) twice a month in the afternoon, with an average attendance of at least 75. There is always a large percentage of the lunatics of every creed who are not rational enough to attend service; for instance, on one occasion, in a pavilion containing fifteen Protestants, I found but one who was deemed, by the nurses in charge, sufficiently sensible or composed to be brought out to church; nevertheless, those patients who are in proper condition, evidently enjoy our service very much; and many of them manifest not a little of true devotion. *Our facilities for worship have been greatly promoted by the grant of a fine, large, and well-ventilated hall in the new pavilion, which will be cool in the summer and well warmed in winter. This magnificent hall we now use and enjoy in place of the inconvenient and dilapidated chapel formerly in use, but now taken down.*"

*"In our last annual report we alluded to a proposed new Episcopal church on Hart's Island, to be erected under the auspices and by the exertions of the energetic Archdeacon. This project has now been wisely abandoned by him, as it was ascertained that the proposed church building could not be a common place of worship for both ends of the island, inasmuch as the warden of the Branch Workhouse considered that too much risk was involved in having the workhouse element brought on Sundays so far away from their places of confinement."*

*"This adverse decision was at first a disappointment, but the necessity for a new and more desirable place of worship has now been removed by the doing away with the former chapel, and by the conveniences of the new hall."*

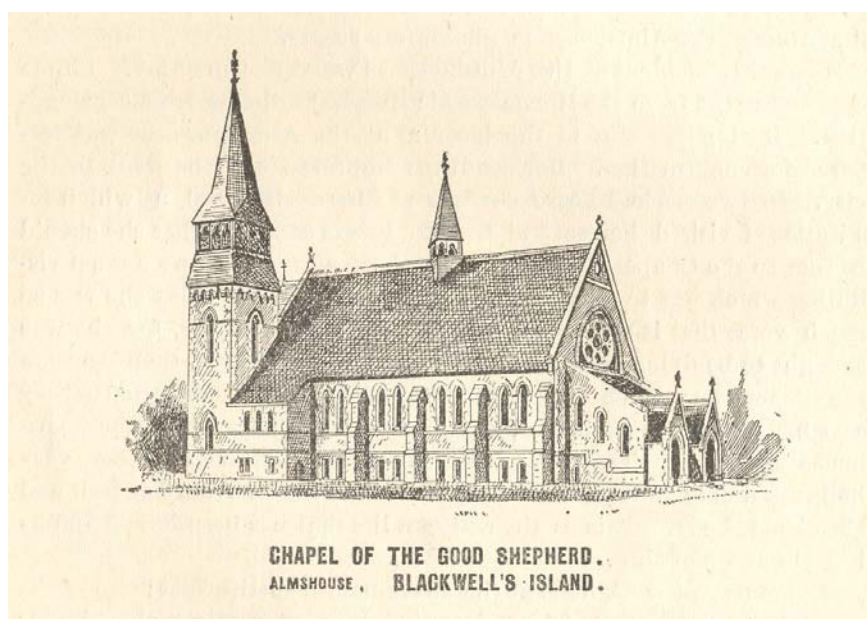
“To render the service more interesting and attractive, I have happily succeeded in securing a good pianist, who comes from the other end of the island, and accompanies the singing with the piano.”

“Mention should be made of the erection, in the past twelve months, of another large and costly pavilion for lunatic women, calculated to accommodate about 350, since the completion of which, the census has been increased by the transfer of patients from the mother institution on Blackwell’s Island. Another improvement is the introduction of the electric light into the pavilions and residences of the officials; its benefits extend over the whole island.”

“In reviewing the past year of labor we can not but feel that as a missionary, a kind Providence has blest our efforts to the good of immortal souls. To His Holy Name be ascribed all the glory and the praise for any good that has been wrought through the poor efforts of His humble and unworthy instrument.”

The Rev. W. G. French in his 1890-1891 annual report speaks of the Almshouse on Blackwell’s Island thusly:

“The burials at the Almshouse have been many, as might be supposed. In the month of July over 60 died...We do not have occasion to use the crypt (of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd) often in the summer...speedy removal to the morgue is necessary. Seldom, however, do we fail to have the bodies of our dead Protestants brought to the Chapel... *Many of the women have a “horrible dread” of burial in the Potter’s Field on Hart’s Island. For if they think that friends might bury them elsewhere, they know that in the “field” they bury in pits; and fear that their body might be at the bottom, and dozens laid over them, and so out of reach of all recognition if friends should wish to remove them.*”



By 1890 the Episcopal Diocese of New York had become keenly aware of the need for a respectful place to bury its poor. A committee of the Archdeaconry of New York "On Inexpensive Burials" met in May of that year to discuss the issue. The following account of that meeting was reprinted in *The Mission News of the Archdeaconry*, a monthly publication, in January 1893.

At a meeting of the Archdeaconry, held on the 6th day of May, 1890, it was resolved:

"That a committee of three be appointed to take into consideration the subject of cheap burials for the poor, and report at the next meeting as to the best mode of securing such cheap burials, whether or not by the appointment of one or more undertaker who will agree to a schedule minimum."

"The committee appointed under the above resolution was composed of the Rev. T. M. Peters, the Rev. Scott M. Cook and the Rev. I. C. Sturges."

"The committee prepared and sent to each clergyman of the city in charge of a congregation a circular, asking for such information as might aid in forming an opinion in regard to the best course to be pursued."

"Replies were received from eighteen only of those who were addressed."

"These eighteen replies represented congregations composed of every class of society, and covered the territory of the Archdeaconry from the Battery to the Twenty-third Ward."

"The usage of these churches in the burial of the poor is various. In some parishes the whole charge of each burial is assumed by the parish, the cost ranging from \$22 to nearly \$50, not including the price of a grave, which is from \$10 to \$25, according to the cemetery selected."

"In other parishes the sum of \$25 is appropriated for each burial, and a grave given besides in a plot in some cemetery secured for the special use of that parish."

"The numerous benefit and insurance societies in which almost all who are able to pay the dues become members, render the expenses of burial to all but the very poor much less burdensome than was formerly the case. Instead of having to collect from neighbors in the case of death, an amount is realized from the society which makes the family of the deceased independent of outside aid."

"The communicants of our Church dying in public institutions are buried in ground given by St. Michael's Church in its cemetery, the City Mission Society paying the charge for opening a grave and St. Elizabeth's Guild meeting other costs of a plain funeral."

"There still remain in connection with almost every church a few whom the parish is called upon to bury. With reference to such burials it might be well for the City Mission Society to record the names of certain undertakers in different portions of the city, who will agree to a low schedule of prices and furnish the information to any clergyman desiring it."

"But your committee is of the opinion that at present it would seem more convenient and preferable to each rector to employ the usual undertaker of his parish in time of need, and that application for information at headquarters would be few. Almost all the arrangements of our Church in New York are so exclusively parochial that any general centre for the purpose of burying the poor is hardly likely to draw attention or its advantages to be availed of."

"Your committee ventures upon the suggestion of a course not indicated indeed in the



resolution under which it is appointed, but which, it is believed, would, if carried into effect, find general favor and result in the attainment of the object contemplated.”

“That suggestion is the establishment of a cemetery by our own Church, within convenient distance and easy of access. There would be a choice from many desirable sites for the purpose. If a large area were purchased, the extent to be not less than that of the new Kensico Cemetery, which embraces six hundred acres, a sufficient portion might be set apart subject to use as a place of free burial upon the order of any city rector.”

“The remaining and chief part of the cemetery, if artistically laid out and properly kept, could hardly fail to be extensively used by members of our large and increasing communion.”

“The outlay for the purchase of ground would be comparatively small. The large demand for funds, exceeding many fold the purchase price, would commence with laying out and improvements.”

“The early expenses would, however, be much lessened by following the usual course of starting with a general and tasteful plan, and keeping in the adornment just in advance of the demand for lots.”

“It is the experience of all cemeteries that many years must elapse before the first outlay would be returned. Your committee would therefore suggest that it might be better to ask for absolutely free gifts for all preliminary purposes, and to stipulate, in consideration thereof, that a certain portion of ground should be set apart for the free use of those needing it; and, further, that a certain proportion of the receipts should be devoted to meeting the funeral charges of the absolutely destitute.”

“Should the establishment of a large cemetery for our Church be deemed undesirable, another method of providing for the burial of the poor would be by making parochial or general arrangements with some one of the cemeteries already existing.”

“Since the abandonment of the use of the old churchyards two new cemeteries have been opened by our Church—one, in 1842, by Trinity Church, and the second, in 1850, by St. Michael’s.”

“Trinity Cemetery contains nineteen acres between One Hundred and Fifty-third and One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Streets and Tenth Avenue and the Hudson River. In its earlier years graves were allotted by the rector of Trinity upon request of the pastors of city churches. This cemetery has long ceased to be used for purposes of general burial. Trinity Church uses St. Michael’s for the interment of those to whom it is called upon to give free graves.”

“St. Michael’s Cemetery commenced with seven acres in 1850; has been enlarged from time to time, until it now embraces seventy-five acres.”

“The burials within its limits exceed twenty thousand, of which one-fifth were provided for by parishes or societies.”

“Plots have been purchased by the Churches of the Ascension, Holy Communion, Holy Apostles, St. Clement’s and the Transfiguration; also by St. Luke’s Hospital, the Homes for Old Men and Aged Couples, Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum, the Leake and Watts Association, the Italian Mission, St. John Baptist’s Foundation and the Sheltering Arms.”

“Lots have also been assigned to the following churches and societies for the burial of their members: Trinity Church, St. Mary the Virgin, St. Mary’s (Manhattanville), St. Timothy’s and St. Ann’s.”

“It may not seem an encouragement to the plan of opening a large Church cemetery to state that many years elapsed after the opening of St. Michael’s Cemetery before the receipts began to meet the annual expenses. This is owing to the fact that the ground was first intended to provide a burial place for the poor, and hence not many others availed

themselves of its privileges.”

“Since the enlargement and laying out of the newer portions on the landscape plan the cemetery has attracted more notice, and the number of family plots now taken up is about 700, and the expense of maintaining the ground in good order met by the receipts.”

“In establishing a large Church cemetery, for general use, the chief portion of its area being intended for family plots, and the burying of the poor being but incidental, the difficulty which so long hampered St. Michael’s would be avoided, and the equilibrium between receipts and expenditures ensured at a much earlier day.”

Your committee is of the opinion that the establishment of a Church cemetery as proposed is the best solution of the difficulty which it is appointed to consider.”

History tells us that a large Church cemetery was not established, the diocese opting for the use of St. Michael’s and others established by individual congregations whenever possible.

The Rev. C. A. Wenman reports on Hart’s Island as follows:

- The Branch Workhouse 1890-1891

Present census: men, 177; women, 21; total, 198; admissions (both sexes) for one year, 1,197.

“Concerning my individual work, with unbroken regularity, I have made the journey to this island twice a month, making week-day visits, at both ends, and on Sundays, officiating both morning and afternoon. I have also never failed to be present at the Sunday “temperance meeting” instituted by Warden Stocking, addressing the convicts in attendance.”

“One hundred dollars’ worth of books by standard authors has been kindly donated through Mr. Montague Marks of the island mission.”

- Branch Lunatic Asylum 1890-1891

Present census: females, 1,150; males, 200; total, 1,350.

“Our Sunday afternoon service is the prominent feature of interest in this portion of our field. It is a glorious service! To see a congregation, averaging about eighty persons, praising God with enthusiasm, and preserving (with but few exceptions) excellent order, is an interesting and moving sight indeed. It shows the potency of things Divine, even on minds deranged.”

“In the course of the year, I have admitted to Holy Baptism two of these female lunatics, one, at her own request, the other, at the urgent request of her mother.”

“The first had comparatively much sense and reason, was in fair health, and yet feared that death might come unawares, before she had received this sacrament of “water and the Holy Ghost.” Three Protestant nurses, who felt she was quite rational enough to realize the step she was about to take, stood as her witnesses. The solemn ceremony was performed in the chapel, after the regular service. The other patient, who had not ordinarily so much reason, seemed to be granted a “lucid interval;” and even evinced some emotion. This baptism was administered in the patients’ pavilion. When

circumstances have rendered it expedient, I have gone more or less (on week days) into all of the twelve pavilions, holding interviews with the more rational patients, seeking out the Protestants, especially those who attend church; but our chief attention has been given to those lying sick in the hospital, and to the ones in extremis mortis. One very aged Scotch Presbyterian woman stated that she had reached nearly a century; and appearances confirmed the truth of her statement; she said she was daily praying for death to come, but was glad to bear all the suffering in this world, which her Lord was pleased to lay upon her."

Editor's Note: The sacramental register of Baptism for the Missionaries of this Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society may be found in the Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. The records of the baptisms mentioned above now follow.

◀New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society▶  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

BAPTISM

DATE OF BAPTISM, *Sep. 7<sup>th</sup> 1890*

FULL NAME OF ~~CHILD~~ *Adult, Agnes Wessell.*

NAMES OF PARENTS, *Fred. & Agnes Redman.*

NAMES OF ~~SPONSORS~~ *Witnesses, Mrs. Josephine Valentine,*  
*Mrs. Jennie Durant, and Miss R. Kelly*

DATE OF BIRTH, *Feb. — 1855.*

INSTITUTION, *Dr. Lunatic Asy. Chapel, Rar. Isd.*

OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *W. H. Henman.*

◀New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society▶  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

BAPTISM

DATE OF BAPTISM, *Sep. 21<sup>st</sup> 1890.*

FULL NAME OF ~~CHILD~~ *Adult, Jennie Eleanor.*

NAMES OF PARENTS, *William & Annie Revell*

NAMES OF ~~SPONSORS~~ *Witness, Rachel Kelly.*

DATE OF BIRTH, *May 14<sup>th</sup> 1867.*

INSTITUTION, *Dr. Lunatic Asylum, Rar. Isd.*

OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *W. H. Henman*

“In conclusion, we beg leave to remark that there is a vast amount of good always accomplished by the faithful missionary that can never be reduced to figures, or even to written statements.”

“The merciful Lord be praised, and to His Holy Name be the glory for all the consolation we have been the humble means of applying to the hearts and souls of the poor, suffering unfortunates comprised within our diversified field.”

- Summary of work done on Randall’s, Ward’s and Hart’s Island 1890-1891 by Fr. Wenman

Public services	113
Aggregate attendance	6,552
Average attendance	58
Holy Communion (public celebrations)	8
Aggregate number of recipients	168
Holy Communion (private celebrations)	10
Aggregate number of recipients	54
Baptisms: infants, 116; adults, 3; total	119*
Private services (bedside and others)	470
Visits	5,628
Papers and tracts distributed	5,990
Books and magazines given out by libraries	15,880

\* Most of the infants baptized were from the Infant’s Hospital on Randall’s Island

- The Branch Workhouse 1891-1892

Present census, men, 86; women, 19; total, 105; admissions (both sexes) for one year, 844 (sic).

“Our City Mission work has here been maintained with the usual regularity, your missionary making the journey from the city twice a month, and holding our mission service with the prisoners on the first and third Sundays, in the forenoon.”

“Considering the decreased census, our attendance has been relatively larger than ever. It has been my unfailing custom to enter each of the barracks or dormitories on Sunday morning before the service, notifying of the same, and inviting all (the Protestants especially) to attend. Thus by going first to them with the invitation I have reason to believe that they have come out in larger numbers to us and to the Lord’s house, than would have otherwise have been the case.”

“In the past year we have been favored with the presence of two men of the Workhouse, endowed with excellent musical talent. These at different times, have presided at the fine M. and H. organ, donated about three years ago; thus making a great acquisition to the singing, which is hearty under all circumstances.”

“Our Christmas and Easter Services were memorable for the extraordinary numbers present. At Easter an unprecedented number of communicants, men and women, partook of the sacred emblems of their risen Saviour’s love. These had been carefully prepared by their pastor on Easter Eve.”

“It is the custom of your missionary to administer Holy Communion at the Workhouse once in three months. And although the number of recipients has not been generally large, yet those who have partaken have given every indication of humility and sincerity. Some of these unfortunates who find their way to the Workhouse have had previous religious training and advantages. And may we not reasonably believe that the partaking of this sacrament is to some of them the strengthening in them of those good things “which remain, but are ready to die” and to others of them the beginning of a new and better life?”

“On the Saturday previous to our service, I rehearsed the hymns with the organist, conversed with the Protestant inmates, as far as practicable, and wrote letters for clothing to be presented to the City Mission on the discharge of some of the men. Books, magazines and newspapers, have been regularly distributed in the barracks.”

- Branch Lunatic Asylum 1891-1892

Present census, females, 1106; males, 78; total, 1184; admissions for one year, females, 84; males, 4.

“This is really a branch of the New York City Asylum for the Insane. About 150 of the inmates have been transferred down to the mother institution on Ward’s Island.”

“At 2:45 pm on Sundays your missionary is driven from the Workhouse to conduct his second service at this lower end of the island. The lunatic women and some men are brought in from the different pavilions and a hearty and enthusiastic service is held. There has been an average of about eighty worshippers.”

“I have gone more or less into the different pavilions seeking out the Protestants and visiting with them, if such a term is applicable to these unfortunates. But our chief attention has been given to those lying sick in the hospital, praying at their bedside and interceding for the souls of the ones passing from earth. And while we feel humble and grateful to the Power who has sustained us in our mission field, yet we resolve to strive after new conquests for the glory of His Name and the extension of His kingdom.”

- The Branch Workhouse 1892-1893

Total admissions for one year, males, 558; females, 112; total, 670; present census, 25

“Our city mission work has here been maintained with the usual regularity, your missionary making the journey from the city twice every month, and holding our mission service with the prisoners on the first and third Sundays, in the forenoon.”

“The attendance has been very good in proportion to the relatively low census. The Parish Visitor, as well as other religious and instructive papers, has been distributed after the service; and the whole census of prisoners have had the privilege of drawing books and magazines from the library.”

“Holy Communion has been administered quarterly to these men and women deprived of their liberty. And although, as might be inferred, the number of recipients has not been large, yet those who have partaken of the spiritual feast have given every indication of sincerity and good intention.”

*“But it is worthy of note that on the 30th of July, ultimo, the Branch Workhouse was abolished from Hart’s Island, twenty-five men only being detailed as a standing census to*



*work the cemetery and bury the friendless dead in the Potter's Field."*

"Yet, at this end of the island, which is designated the "Hill," from the fact of its being an elevation of rising ground, our mission service is maintained as heretofore, as the barracks, formerly occupied by people committed to the Branch Workhouse, have been transformed into pavilions for the insane, and are now occupied by 400 lunatics, the larger proportion of whom are females; but to speak particularly of the class of unfortunates located at this upper landing would be to anticipate a future report."

- The New York Asylum For The Insane 1892-1893
- Geo. M. Smith M. D. Acting Med. Sup't.

Present census (both landings), females, 1374; males, 176; total, 1550; nurses and orderlies, 124; admissions for one year, 474

"The above is the official title of this Institution, as it is a branch of the great City Asylum, located on Ward's Island; although it was formerly designated as the Branch Lunatic Asylum; but the mother institution has another important branch at Central Islip, L. I."

"To conduct a 3 P.M. service (twice a month), your missionary is driven from the upper landing to the lower end of the island, which is termed the "Hollow," in contradistinction to the "Hill."

"Here nearly three-fourths of the patients are domiciled. In orderly procession they are brought in from their respective pavilions, and a hearty service is held of worship and song."

"There has been an average of eighty or more in congregation, including the nurses in charge."

"I have kept a full list of the Protestants, and have gone, from time to time, into all of the pavilions, without exception, visiting with them, as far as they have been in a talking mood, and have also conversed with other patients, without regard to creed."

"It is our constant effort to seek out such patients as are eligible to Holy Communion, and to administer to them this sacrament in their own pavilions. At no visitation has the hospital ward been passed over, but prayers have been said at the bedside of those prostrated with illness and infirmity; and intercessions made for the souls passing from earth to (we trust) a better condition."

"For any measure of success that has crowned our humble efforts, God's holy Name be praised through Jesus Christ."

"We omitted to state, under its proper head, that the Lunatic Asylum on Hart's Island has been favored with a visit from our superintendent, the Rev. Brockholst Morgan, who paid a visit to the patients in their pavilion, as well as to others."

The 1892-1893 report of the Rev. C. C. Profitt for the Almshouse and Workhouse on Blackwell's Island speaks of the recent typhus fever epidemic.

"Three months of the year there were no public services held, the prisoners not being allowed to assemble on account of the typhus fever. Tents were erected outside of the buildings for those who had the dreaded disease, or those who were suspected of having it."

"During part of this time a number of cases were received from the City Hospital,

Bellevue Hospital and the Penitentiary. The Commissioners of Charities and Corrections having made the Workhouse a quarantine station for the care of its own sick, who were supposed to have the typhus fever, fourteen tents were erected, accommodating about 140 patients.”

“There were also five tents erected on the grounds at the Almshouse for suspects, which, developing, were sent at once to the Workhouse. Only the doctor, the clergy and orderlies procured for the occasion were allowed to visit the tents. It was a time of great uneasiness and anxiety, of gloom and depression. A number died of the terrible scourge. It gives much satisfaction to your missionary to report that of this number those who were Protestants and committed to his spiritual care received the Blessed Sacrament at his hands and the Benediction of the Church. In the administration of the Holy Communion in the quarantined tents, only the paten and chalice were used. A small, plain wooden table answered for an altar, devoid of linen. The celebrant used no vestments, for he was enveloped from head to foot in a large cloak, with hood attached, so as to completely cover the body, except a small aperture for the front of the face. Yet with all this necessary rudeness and simplicity, the grandeur and dignity of the service was sublime, as the participants received the “Bread of Life,” of which they would never more partake. These were men who had been sent to the Island for misdemeanors or disorderly conduct. Truly penitent on their death-bed, they found the Saviour. Resigned and filled with hope they found comfort, as did the “penitent thief,” in the words of Christ, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”

*“It might be of interest to note the manner of burial when one died of the disease. The body was wrapped in blankets saturated with a disinfectant solution, then placed in a plain pine coffin, coated with pitch on the inside, the lid nailed on, and then the whole wrapped in another blanket saturated with the same solution, and sent away by the smallpox boat, Franklin Edson, to Hart’s Island, to be buried in the Potter’s Field. Surely it must have been a source of comfort and consolation to the friends of the dead to know that the Church had ministered to their sick and suffering ones, more especially since they were not allowed to visit them in their last hours or to attend the burial.”*

New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

BURIAL

DATE OF BURIAL, *October 4<sup>th</sup> 1892*

FULL NAME, *Salina Hanson*

DATE OF DEATH, *October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1892*

AGE, *76 years* INSTITUTION, *Alms House*

PLACE OF BURIAL, *Potter's Field*

OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *C. C. P. Moffatt.*

The Rev. C. W. De Lyon Nichols, Chaplain to Metropolitan Hospital on Blackwell’s Island relates in his 1893-1894 report the following account of the dying words of a woman destined to be buried in the Potter’s Field.

“Let us enter one of the wards of the Metropolitan Hospital...Thirteen women in the

last stages of consumption are lying side by side on cots, seeing one another die...One poor woman was evidently breathing her last, for a white screen had been drawn around her cot. A nurse whose face was all gentleness stood by her bedside, smoothing her clammy forehead. The card at the foot of the bedstead had not the name of a solitary friend written on it."

"The dying woman, who was only in her twenty-third year, nerved herself up to make one parting request, "Won't you pray for me, minister? I got somebody to write to my sister a week ago that I was dying, but she would not come near me. The only man I ever was really fond of abandoned me as soon as my health broke down. Oh! Oh!" the dying consumptive sobbed, "I want one person on earth to remember me just a little while after I am gone and laid away, piled up in one of those trenches in the Potter's Field. Here is a little plain gold ring that my mother gave me before I went to the bad; won't you take it and wear it for my sake, nurse? See that my shroud looks nice when they lay me out, and cross my hands upon my breast. Oh, if I had one friend or relation to put a single white flower upon my coffin, a lily; I was not worthy of it when I was alive, but when I am dead—"

◀ New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society ▶  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

BURIAL

DATE OF BURIAL, 11th Oct 1894  
FULL NAME, Lizzie Corbett  
DATE OF DEATH, Oct, 10th 1894  
AGE, 26 INSTITUTION,  
PLACE OF BURIAL, Metropolitan Hospital Dead House  
OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, Charles J. Nichols  
Cause of death, - consumption

Continuing now with the annual reports of the Rev. C. A. Wenman on Hart's Island:

- New York City Asylum For The Insane 1893-1894  
Geo. A. Smith, M. D. - Acting Med. Sup't.

Present census (both landings), total, 1600; males, 225; females, 1375; attendants—male, 86; female, 125; admissions for one year, 193

- North Hospital (Upper Landing) 1893-1894

Present census, 306; males, 146; females, 160; attendants - males, 12; females, 28

"Since rendering to our City Mission Society my previous annual report, this north end of the island has undergone a radical change in its institutions. For the branch Workhouse with its several buildings was then located here, but now the insane are domiciled at both ends of the island, as *the Workhouse was abolished from Hart's about one year ago, excepting that a standing census of thirty men are detailed here from the*

*main Workhouse to work the cemetery or bury the dead, who are committed to the Potter's Field. These men being prisoners are subject to Workhouse rules and regulations, and occupy one of the old barracks or dormitories. They are termed city cemetery helpers.* But all of the other dormitories have been renovated, and transformed into pavilions for the insane of both sexes. For convenience and to designate the particular portion of the island where the patients may happen to be domiciled, the official terms have recently been adopted of "North" and "South" hospital. The islanders have heretofore used the designations of the "Hill" and the "Hollow," and no doubt will continue so to do, except when alluding to the institution itself."

"At this end it is not an unpleasant sight to see the patients out of doors on the grass, under the shade of the trees, taking in the wholesome air, while enjoying the sights and sounds of nature. They are seated on their long wooden benches, and are favored with the magnificent water view presented by the broad Sound. Much better this than to be confined within the buildings."

"On this remote island your missionary has spent six days and four nights monthly (including the journey to and fro), administering to the patients and others, both in public and private, the teaching and consolations of the Gospel, rendering two public services a month, at each end of the island. At this upper landing I have held a mission service in the chapel at 10:45 A.M., with an average attendance of about thirty-five (the lighter census is here), and have administered Holy Communion once a quarter, and upon the greater festivals. On the week days I have visited and conversed with patients of the asylum, endeavoring to cheer their spirits with the exercise of sympathy, and to lighten their mental or spiritual burdens in cases where such a thing is feasible."

"We have not overlooked the convict laborers who are placed on the cemetery, but have visited these men in their quarters, inviting them to attend our Sunday services, to which the Protestants, happening to be among them, have most always responded."

- (b) South Hospital (Lower Landing) 1893-1894

Present census, 1293; males, 79; females, 1214; attendants—males, 24; females, 97

"At this point also your missionary has held two public services a month at 2:45 P.M., being driven (after his morning service) from the north end of the island. The heavier census being here, our average attendance has been (we may safely say) ninety."

"Could certain persons happen in to our worship, and observe the good order generally maintained by these people, could they hear the hearty singing of some, and at least the effort on the part of others to sing and respond, could they witness the satisfaction, nay, the joy depicted on the countenance of these unfortunates, they would never put the question: "What is the use of holding services for the insane?"

"Let us be sure that God will bless and honor His own instrumentalities, and through them apply His grace to souls, as He deems fit."

"For the past two years, at least, we have employed the extempore mode of preaching (rarely using a written sermon) as being very much better calculated to interest and to rivet the attention of our special classes of hearers than the other mode. A plain, informal, even blunt face-to-face talk, drawing illustrations, perhaps, from our own every-day experience is what these people need for their greater benefit."

"As for several reasons it has not been practicable to administer Holy Communion publicly at this portion of the island, we have therefore gone into the different pavilions from time to time and administered the "comfortable sacrament" to such as desire to

receive it. At these celebrations a privacy and quietude has been insured by assembling the communicants in apartments isolated from the main ward, though adjoining it."

"This has been done of a Sunday, immediately after our afternoon service, being almost equal to a third service."

"The general hospital ward for the female insane is at this lower landing. It carries a census of forty patients, and is always full. We never pass this by, but always enter its doors to find out and to minister to the Protestant sick, holding prayers at their bedside, also trying to have a friendly or a comforting word for all the rest."

"In this resting place for the sick the following interesting incident but recently occurred: The patient was on my list, a Lutheran in faith, a German in nationality, though having excellent command of English. Her mind was evidently less impaired than were many minds around her. Two female friends had come from the city to pay her a visit. I was on the ward when they were there. She introduced me to them as her pastor. After their departure I again approached her, saying, "So you had the pleasure of a visit from your friends." She said she had, and was so glad to see them. The patient was then sitting up in bed, not being very ill. Her face was the personification of contentment and of joy. "Oh," said she, "God has been so good to me. I have had much sorrow in the past; for my husband met a fearful end; he choked to death. But I feel that God is my friend, and all will be well. I offer my prayers to Him night and morning. As Jesus suffered and died for us all, we know that He loves us; and because He loves us He will make all things work together for our good, and will bless to us our trials and troubles." Oh, the radiance of that face; for the woman was exalted in spirit as she uttered these words. She was triumphant, and could not have been more so had she possessed the world. She must have felt in that exalted moment that through Christ all things were hers. Such is the power of faith."

"And now to God's Holy Name be ascribed all the glory and the praise for any good that may have been wrought through the poor efforts of His unworthy servant."

"We omitted to mention the interesting fact that at the Insane Asylum on Hart's Island I have administered Holy Baptism, at her own request, to a Jewess, who declared her faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the true Messiah of promise. Her Protestant nurse acted as her witness."

- New York City Asylum For the Insane 1894-1895  
Herman C. Evarts, M.D. - Acting Med. Supt.

Present census (both landings), total, 1543; males, 290; females, 1253; admissions for one year, 113

- "North Hospital" (Upper Landing) 1894-1895

Present census, total, 270: men, 220; females, 50.

"Until recently, at this north end, the female patients have predominated; but by late changes most all of the women have been transferred either to Ward's Island or to the south end of Hart's. So that all the pavilions here (with one single exception), are now occupied by men which gives me at this upper landing an almost entirely male congregation, especially as the men at the branch Workhouse form an accession to the number. These male insane are for the most part new transfers from Ward's. On this

island lying out on the broad Sound, City Mission work has been maintained with the usual regularity; your missionary making the journey from the city twice each month, and holding a service at each end of the island, beginning at 10:30 A.M. at this north end. Holy Communion has been administered in public quarterly, and also in celebration of the higher festivals, all taking place in the regular Chapel building. *I have paid visits to the male and female patients in their respective quarters; and also to the men of the Branch Workhouse, who are detailed here as "cemetery-workers," to consign to their last resting-place the friendless dead. Of the names of these "helpers," who are of the Protestant faith, I have kept a current list; and have always invited them to church, and they have come."*

- (b) "South Hospital" (Lower Landing) 1894-1895

Present census, 1273; males, 70; females, 1203

"A regular semi-monthly mission service has been held in the afternoon at this landing. There has been an average of perhaps 100 in congregation, including the male and female attendants. The sick in the general hospital have been systematically visited, and prayers offered at their bedside. After the regular P.M. service I have (when circumstances favored), gone into some pavilion and administered Holy Communion to such communicants as were desirous of receiving the same. On one of these occasions I came across a patient who was weeping aloud and bitterly, the tears copiously flowing. Approaching her I inquired the cause of her grief and the occasion of her tears. The distressed woman replied, through her sobs, that she had committed a sin and feared she would not be forgiven. In the course of the interview, it was ascertained that the person was a communicant. So she was informed that my main object in entering the ward was to give Communion to such as would receive it. Said she: "I am not worthy of it. My sin has been too great." She was then reminded that there is no sin so great but that the precious blood of Jesus can wash it away. And I quoted to her that Scripture which says: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be crimson, they shall be as wool," at the same time exhorting her to communicate, stating the belief that it would prove a comfort to her, as it was called the "comfortable sacrament"; that it would, through the merits of Christ, seal to her the forgiveness of her sins. And looking up, said she, through her sobs: Do you really think that it will be a comfort to me? If you think so, I will receive it with the rest."

"And as the holy and impressive office proceeded, her sobs were hushed, her tears were dried. And this afflicted woman evidently received that inward consolation which the Holy Ghost the Comforter alone can administer in all the sorrows of earth."

"It is the Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society, which (through her missionaries), systematically brings the consolation of the Gospel; and which breaks the Bread of Life to these unfortunate and isolated people of reformed faith, thus helping to accomplish one of the blessed results of Messiah's advent: The poor have the Gospel preached to them."

"And now for any measure of success that has crowned my humble efforts, God's Holy Name be praised through Jesus Christ."

- The Manhattan State Hospital 1895-1896  
Hart's Island Branch.  
Amos E. Macdonald, M.D.: General Superintendent  
Herman C. Evarts, M.D.: First Ass't Physician in Charge

Present total census of patients, 1,550; males, 375; females, 1,175 total admissions for one year, 299; number of attendants, male, 57; female, 134; total, 191

- "North Hospital" (Upper Landing) 1895-1896  
Present census: Total, 365; males, 296; females, 69.

"This institution was formerly entitled the New York City Asylum for the Insane; but on February last, by an act of the Legislature, it was formally transferred over to the care of the State, and now bears the official title of the "Manhattan State Hospital." The mother institution is located on Ward's Island, while its two branches are here, and at Central Islip, L. I."

"On this Island, lying out in the broad Sound, city mission work has been maintained with the usual regularity, your missionary making the journey from the city twice each month (occasionally three times), and holding a service at each end of the Island, beginning at this North end at 10:30 AM. Holy Communion has been administered in public quarterly, and also in celebration of the higher festivals, all taking place in the regular chapel. I have paid Visits to the male and female patients and others in their respective quarters. Our work here on the "Hill" has been furthered and rendered more interesting from the fact that since last February Mrs. Fred Bartels (a resident of the Island, and an official), has kindly volunteered to lead our music on the fine Mason & Hamlin organ in our possession. Mrs. Bartels is a most competent musician, both vocally, and on the instrument, and, as representing the Roman Catholic faith, deserves our warmest thanks and appreciation. Such acts of kindness and courtesy manifested between different Christian churches are a significant sign of that unity for which Christian people are longing and praying."

- "South Hospital" (Lower Landing) 1895-1896  
Present census, 1185; males, 79; females, 1106.

"At this South end we have no chapel building; but our mission services are held in the dining-room of Pavilion 5, at which 400 patients are seated at meal-time. This room makes a very desirable and comfortable place in which to hold service, as it is abundantly large, well ventilated, cool in the summer, and well warmed by steam in the colder weather. In it our City Mission has maintained a regular semi-monthly service at 2:30 P.M., at which there has been an average attendance of between ninety and one hundred. After this service I have most generally gone by rotation into one of the pavilions, and administered Holy Communion to such Protestant patients as were desirous of receiving it. There are often sixteen or more wishing to communicate. On one occasion, in the afternoon service, we were discoursing on the subject of the glory of the resurrection body, and of the new and exalted faculties and powers it would likely possess; and were dwelling upon the comforting truth that in the resurrection there would undoubtedly be a recognition of parted loved ones; when, at the conclusion of worship, a patient sitting near came up, and exclaimed: "Oh, I love to hear you preach! I love to hear you preach! I



shall some day see my father and my mother, and the friends that I have loved, Oh! Oh!" at the same time rubbing her hands together, through happy expectation. She was truly "rejoicing in hope" with joy unspeakable."

"To present to these unfortunate people the bright side of religion, and a good hope, through unmerited grace, of better things to come, is the spiritual food they need."

"The sick and dying, in the general Female Hospital, have been systematically visited, prayers offered at their bedside, and the Eucharist given when occasion has required."

"A Presbyterian patient of no little intelligence and of much good sense on many points (although she had her delusions) recently passed to her rest in the above Hospital. Through sectarian prejudice, she would (though respectfully) decline our offers of bedside prayer with her; but when she felt the end approaching, she, of her own accord, requested me to give her the Holy Communion "in the name of the Presbyterian Church," I replied that we would gladly administer to her in the name of Christ and of His one universal Church, which included all the baptized. The patient was entirely satisfied, and communicated with several others. She received with the greatest devotion, drinking in every word of the solemn office, and making it her own; departing this troubled life in the following week."

"Another patient here, feeling her life ebbing away, stated uncertainly as to her baptism; so we gave her clinic and hypothetical baptism, to her great satisfaction."

"It is the Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society which (through her missionaries) systematically brings the consolatory sacraments of the Gospel, and which breaks the Bread of Life to these afflicted and isolated people, thus helping to accomplish one of the blessed results of Messiah's advent: The poor have the Gospel preached to them."

- CITY CEMETERY HELPERS 1895-1896

Present census, 21

*"This small body of men virtually constitutes a limited branch of the Workhouse on Blackwell's Island, though they are not so termed; but are officially called as above, "City Cemetery Helpers." Their maximum census is thirty-two, though it has not reached the full complement for many months. They are detailed from the main Workhouse to this Island in order to bury the poor and friendless dead in that ground popularly known as the Potter's Field."*

"They are really prisoners, convicted as drunk and disorderly, and are in all respects under prison discipline. To them I have given quite some attention, trying to do them good and to keep them interested in our services on the "Hill." To this effort in their behalf they have well responded, and have been very well represented at church. For two or three of these persons I have, at their own request, drawn up a limited pledge of abstinence, to which they have attached their names. Though the pledge will not, in and of itself, keep the signer from intemperance, yet doubtless it will help him, if he be conscientious and in earnest humbly depend upon the grace of God. But the one great and universal temperance society is the Christian Church, with its means of grace, which teaches temperance in all things."

"One Sunday, while conversing with some of these "Cemetery Helpers," one of them remarked: "I have read today in my Testament a text which I learned when a boy." He then quoted in full from St. John's first Epistle: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And the tears most profusely gushed from the man's eyes, his

breast heaved with emotion, and his utterance was choked through sobs, as he said: "I was piously brought up a Presbyterian, and once attended to all the duties of religion; but through temptation and drink, I departed from the narrow way; but I now read my Testament regularly, and say my prayers. When discharged, I mean to try hard to keep from drink, and from further trouble." This man had been a faithful comer to our services. The Sunday before his discharge he conversed with me again amid many tears."

"The above touching incident presents another phase of the good work of the City Mission Society, that it helps those who are thus disposed to carry out the will of their divine Lord to minister to those who are "sick and in prison."

"And now for any measure of success that may have crowned our humble efforts in this good cause, God's holy name be praised through Jesus Christ."

In the June 1896 issue of "The Mission News of the Archdeaconry" an account of the Decoration Day service on Hart's Island is given as follows:

The little cemetery on Hart's Island, where soldiers and sailors who have died at the Alms House on Blackwell's Island have been buried, was not forgotten on Decoration Day. Each grave was decorated with a little flag and with beautiful flowers by Reno Post of the Grand Army of the Republic. The simple but graceful monument erected by that Post, in 1877, in memory of veteran Union soldiers and sailors buried close by, was also similarly decorated. About one hundred and fifty of the members of the Post in full uniform, accompanied by a band of music and many friends from the city, were present, General OBeirne having placed the steamer "Brennan" at their disposal to convey them to the Island and bring them back to the city. After the reading of the beautiful ritual of the Grand Army of the Republic, the Rev. George F. Nelson (superintendent of the City Mission Society) delivered an address appropriate to the occasion. First of all he reminded these veteran soldiers and sailors of the vastness of the war in which they and their deceased comrades had been engaged. He reviewed the first call for 75,000 men, then the action of Congress some weeks later authorizing the President to accept a million volunteers, then the increase of this number till more than 2,600,000 men had been enrolled on the side of the Union, at one time or another, before the war was ended ;— then the appalling casualties—5,221 officers and 90,868 men who were killed in action or who died of wounds; 2,321 officers and 182,329 men who died of disease or accident, making a total of 280,739 casualties in the Union Army alone. He said that the last veteran of the war buried in this "God's Acre" on Hart's Island was an old man who had died recently at the Alms House after living there ten months without letting any one know that he had been a soldier, though it was found from papers on his body after his death that he had served three enlistments—eleven years altogether—in the Union Army, during the war and afterwards, had fought in thirty-four battles, had received an honorable discharge at the termination of each enlistment, and yet had asked for no pension nor for admission to a Soldiers' Home, so far as is known, being content to suffer the poverty of his old age in silence, like one who has learned to endure hardness as a good soldier.

Mr. Nelson did not conclude his address till he had reminded the veterans of Reno Post and their friends of the duties of citizenship and religion which call every day for the exercise of faith and courage and loyalty.

Continuing now with the annual report of the Rev. Charles Wenman:

- The Manhattan State Hospital 1896-1897  
Hart's Island Branch.  
Amos E. Macdonald, M.D.: General Superintendent  
Herman C. Evarts, M.D.: First Ass't Physician in Charge

Total census of patients, 1,550 ; males, 375; females, 1,175; total admissions for one year, 108; number of attendants, male, 58; female, 136; total, 194.

- "North Hospital" (Upper Landing) 1896-1897

Present census: total, 365; males, 296; females, 69.

"On this Island, lying out in the broad Sound, about sixteen miles from New York, City Mission work has been maintained with usual regularity, your missionary making the journey from the city twice each month, alternating his Sundays with Randall's Island, and holding a public service at this end of Hart's at 10:30 A.M., and one at the south or lower end at 2:30 P.M. *Our average attendance at this first service has been between forty and fifty, the "cemetery helpers," from the Workhouse being well represented.* Mrs. Bartels, our organist, has most faithfully continued her volunteer musical ministrations, even amid personal difficulties, and is well deserving of our gratitude and appreciation, which have been already manifested by the Society. I also have visited among the patients and officials in this section, and have ministered to the Protestant sick in the male hospital ward. Celebrations of Holy Communion have been made quarterly, and for the greater festivals."

- "South Hospital" (Lower Landing) 1896-1897

Present census, 1,185; males, 79; females, 1,106.

"As has been already stated, our mission services at this lower landing begin at 2:30 P.M. The heavier census is in this portion of the Island, and, consequently, the larger attendance at divine service. The average has been from 100 to 110. Through the efforts and appeal of Dr. Evarts, physician in charge, the State has generously furnished us with a very good organ for the use of our service. And we have had another valuable acquisition to our Church work in the advent of Miss Mahoney, the regularly appointed pharmacist, who is not only a competent organist, but a zealous worker, and a communicant of our own Church. A year ago Miss Mahoney volunteered to play the new organ, and, moreover, has formed and drilled a choir of nine persons, all employees. They have been drilled and rehearsed with infinite pains, meeting the organist weekly for the purpose. A choir is something we never had before. Too much praise cannot be given to this zealous and self-sacrificing worker. The music has increased the interest in, and the attendance on, our service, and the worshippers are delighted."

"On Saturday when here, I have always visited in the general female hospital, administering to, and holding bedside services with, the sick, and smoothing at times the pillow of the dying."

"At the close of the afternoon service on Sundays I have (with but few exceptions) gone by invitation into one of the pavilions, and administered Holy Communion to the female Protestant communicants."

“For the relaxation and diversion of both patients and attendants, the State has furnished, at least once a month, a series of amateur theatricals, with music, songs, etc. Large numbers have been present at these entertainments, which have furnished (it is to be hoped) those temporary changes of scene and of thought so essential to the impaired mind.”

This would prove to be the last report of that good and faithful servant the Rev. Charles Aldis Wenman. He retired due to illness in 1898, and would die on February 27, 1899. From his obituary in the New York Times February 28, 1899 and other sources we relate the following biographical information as follows:

The Rev. Charles Aldis Wenman died yesterday at his home, 436 Macon Street, Brooklyn, from the effects of a paralytic stroke sustained last November. He was born in this city 58 years ago, and was a graduate of the General Theological Seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 7, 1868 by the Rt. Rev. Horatio Potter, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. His first charge was that of Assistant Rector of Grace Episcopal Church, Brooklyn Heights. He also served as rector of various parishes in the northern part of the State. For the last sixteen years he had been Chaplain of Ward's, Randall's, and Hart's Islands under the auspices of the City Mission Society. He is survived by a daughter and three sons.

From the 1897-1898 annual report of the Rev. Charles C. Proffitt, Chaplain to the Almshouse and City Hospital on Blackwell's Island we read:

“The Right Rev. Henry C. Potter, Bishop of the Diocese, visited the Chapel of the Good Shepherd on Trinity Sunday and confirmed a class of 42 men and women, the largest class ever presented at the Almshouse. It was a most impressive service, as the Bishop was accompanied by a number of Deacons he had ordained in the morning at Calvary Church, several of them assisting at the service. There was also present the Rev. George F. Nelson, D.D., Superintendent of the Society, the Rev. Hugh Maguire, and others of the clergy. After the Confirmation Service in the Chapel, the Bishop administered the apostolic rite in three of the hospital wards to those who were unable to come to the Chapel on account of sickness or physical disability.”

“We are deeply grateful to the Guild of St. Elizabeth for their valuable assistance rendered at the Almshouse. The usual Christmas-tide and Easter-tide dinners were given in the library under the Chapel. There was a bountiful supply of good things, and over twelve hundred partook of the feast, including many of the people in the outer wards. The Guild also provides tea and sugar to be dispensed in the hospital wards, or to those who are sick, the whole year round. *There are also four members who visit the Almshouse weekly, especially the hospital wards. The Guild also has a “Burial Fund,” but can only bury a limited number of those who have no friends, as the death-rate at the Alms-house is very large. During the last ten years over nine hundred people (Protestants) have died, and all of these have had the Burial Service of the Church. Many of these have been saved from Potter's Field by the Guild of St. Elizabeth.* They have accomplished a grand and noble work for the Master in ministering to the sick, relieving the needy, comforting the distressed. Such is their work. The field is indeed large, and many wants are supplied;

still, much more could be done if Church-people would only come and see for themselves. May God bless and prosper the works of mercy, love and charity of this Guild, and in the hereafter may theirs be the happiness to realize Christ's words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

In October 1898 the Rev. David T. Howell was appointed Missionary of the City Mission Society. His duties included visits to Hart's Island. His first report, printed in the 1897-1898 annual report of the society, follows.

"On October 1st I was appointed to succeed the Rev. Charles A. Wenman, to whom I am indebted for many valuable suggestions concerning my work."

"The duties assigned to me by the Superintendent are: Alternate Sunday services at Randall's and Hart's Islands, a week-day service at the Colored Home and Hospital, visiting Yorkville and Harlem Prisons. The work, as I have been able to see it thus far, may be divided into five classes: feeble-minded children, insane adults, sick people, paupers, and prisoners—a work varied enough to demand all the energy, sympathy and wisdom possible."

"At the very beginning, I was forcibly and agreeably impressed by the courtesy and consideration shown to me by the superintendents, physicians and officials of the institutions to which I was sent. They made the introduction to my work easy and pleasant."

*"One Saturday night I received a telephone message from the Woman's Hospital, and, going down, the doctor met me, and said, 'There is a woman dying; she can't live many minutes.' Conscious, but weak, a poor, homeless woman was on the border-land. Kneeling beside her, softly and slowly I said the Lord's Prayer. Her eyes opened and her hand moved. Then I said the Kyrie. The nurse, who stood watching, said, 'She understands.' I then repeated the Creed and the Prayer of Commendation, and in a few moments her soul had gone into the world beyond, and found, I hope, a home, though in this world it knew none, and her body must be buried in Potter's Field."*

"The Roman Catholic Chaplain at Randall's Island told me, and I am finding it to be true, that, in a certain way, the paupers are the most pitiful class. The world has no use for them, nor do they seem to have much use for themselves. They represent the dross of humanity; a lunatic will interest you, a sick person will arouse your sympathy, a prisoner will seek your aid for release or help, but the paupers seem to be mentally, morally and physically dead, and yet a little kindness shown or some interest taken often arouses their gratitude."

"In visiting prisoners I find, having had some experience in this work before, that the most hopeful cases are those who are in for the first time. It is hard to deal with men who are 'jail birds,' but a man who is locked up for the first time has some sense of the shame and sorrow, if not the sin, of it. I asked a man in a cell what he was in for; he said, 'For trying to ride a bicycle when I was drunk.' 'Did you ever try to ride when you were sober?' 'No.' To those who have gone through the experience of learning to ride, the sight of a drunken man trying to master the wheel is ridiculous. He promised me that when he got out he would learn to ride a wheel while he was sober."

“The work of the City Missionary is indeed a sowing “beside all waters,” and the motive for it all must be, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” May He give strength and wisdom to do it wisely and well, for His sake.”

◀ New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society ▶  
City Mission House, 38 Bleecker Street.

CAUSE OF DEATH, BURIAL

DATE OF BURIAL, *Friday, Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup> 1898*

FULL NAME, *Daniel Gruber*

DATE OF DEATH, *Dec. 23 1898*

AGE, *65* INSTITUTION, *Alms House, B. I.*

PLACE OF BURIAL, *City Cemetery Hart's Island*

OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN, *David J. Howell*

Unfortunately Fr. Howell's tenure at with the City Mission Society would be a short one. Due to marital difficulties he renounced the ministry on May 27, 1899.

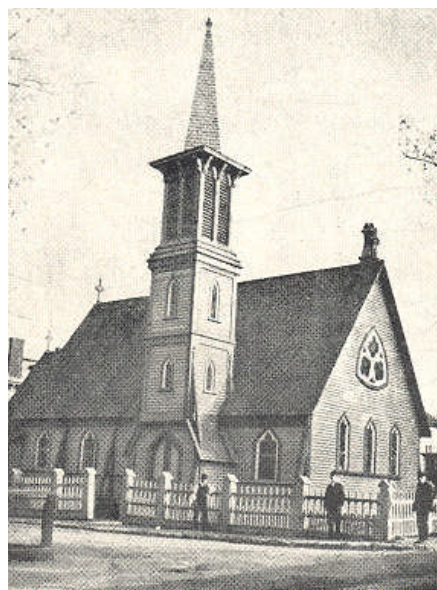
Moving along to the 1898-1899 annual reports of the City Mission Society we find another mention of the Potter's Field in the report of the Rev. Charles S. Brown at Bellevue Hospital.

“My chief point now is Bellevue Hospital perhaps the most widely known hospital in America. This house of healing, with the pavilions for alcoholic and insane patients, training schools for male and female nurses on its grounds, or near by, is a scene of constant activity. The ambulance gong is heard at all hours, for the territory which this branch of the service looks after extends from Houston Street to 42d Street east of Fourth Avenue, and, in emergency, even farther. This hospital can accommodate about eight hundred patients, and the number of the employees almost reaches the same figure, so right here we have a population sufficient to make several Western villages. The larger portions of the procession of sufferers who pass within its gates are restored to health by the medical attendance they there receive; many are transferred to the homes and hospitals on Blackwell's Island. *Others die here, their tenement of clay being taken to the morgue adjoining the hospital and interred, if not claimed by friends, in the Potter's Field on Hart's Island.* Our Chapel of Christ the Consoler has two services on Sunday—the Holy Eucharist and Evening Prayer with addresses, also Litany on Wednesday with address, at all of which times special intercessions are made for the sick and the dying. Our services are short and bright, with music at each under the leadership of our efficient organist, Miss Stahl. At the Morning Service we have a choir composed of young ladies,

whose tuneful solos and anthems cheer the patients and help them to forget their troubles. The chaplain visits the wards, caring for the Protestant inmates. The Eucharist is administered privately to those about to undergo the trying ordeal of the operation-table. Patients who have been cured but are still weak, and perhaps have no home to go to, are sent by us to Convalescent Homes. Our library is a great boon, and is well patronized by the patients and hospital employees. Magazines and papers, including a gift of Parish Visitors from Mr. Thomas Whittaker, are very acceptable to the readers. Committees of Church ladies come to the hospital to visit the sick and to care for the altar and its furnishings. Flowers, when in season, are sent in every week to brighten dark lives with their message of hope.”



Following Fr. Howell on Hart’s Island itself was the Rev. Arthur Forbes. He had just accepted the rectorship of Grace Episcopal Church on City Island on March 25, 1890 so additional duties on Hart’s Island were quite appropriate. His 1898-1899 report follows.





- Branch Workhouse 1898-1899

“I began to officiate as missionary on Hart’s Island last Trinity Sunday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1899. Since then I have held a service at the south end of the island every Sunday afternoon. There were, however, two Sunday afternoons when I could not get across from City Island in a small rowboat on account of the heavy sea which prevailed.”

“The prisoners to whom I minister have been committed for periods of time varying from three to six months for vagrancy, disorderly conduct, etc. The present census is 120. The average attendance at the services has been thirty.”

“What an inestimable privilege to point out in simple language to these poor, benighted souls the way of the better life! I am glad that such a privilege is mine, and I am thankful to say that not a few of the prisoners have given proof of their hearty interest in our Church services.”

Fr. Forbes makes no mention of the Manhattan State Hospital on Hart’s Island in his report. That work seems to have been assigned to the Rev. T. Gardiner Littell; however his report mentions only the branch of the hospital found on Ward’s Island.

In the volume of annual reports for the year 1899-1900 the only institution listed on Hart’s Island is the Branch Workhouse; Fr. Forbes reporting.

“In the constantly changing congregation on Hart’s Island, to whom I minister, I have all classes and conditions of men who serve short terms.”

“Some of the prisoners are there for the first time, while others have been committed again and again. One bright, intelligent young man said that when he was released from custody he had no place to go to; he could not obtain employment and, being hungry, he was compelled to beg, but to give him courage to beg he foolishly resorted to the use of spirituous liquors, and then he found himself once more within the grasp of the law.”

“Your missionary tries, with God’s help, to impress his hearers with the fact that the goodness of God, which loves and saves men, should lead them to repentance, and that the inward and spiritual grace removes all social distinctions and men become one in Christ.”

“How uplifting it must be for the prisoners to be enabled to hear the glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ and have their steps in life’s pathway guided by the light of God’s truth! They seem very grateful for the religious services, and join heartily and audibly in the responses.”

“Through the City Mission Society I am on Hart’s Island as a watchman on the tower of Zion, to warn sinners of the great danger that confronts their souls and to encourage those who are innocent sufferers, downtrodden, destitute, homeless and forgotten by their fellowmen.”

Average census for the year 125; Average attendance for the year 30

The Rev. Arthur Forbes continues with his 1900-1901 annual report as follows:

“The religious work at the Branch Workhouse, Hart’s Island, continues with unabated vigor. During the year last past your missionary humbly endeavored to look after the

spiritual interests of those whom the City Mission Society saw fit to entrust to his care.”

“Many of the prisoners expressed to me their deep gratitude for the religious advantages which were so kindly afforded them, while they were serving their brief terms of commitment.”

“It was certainly a great pleasure to see how orderly and attentive my congregations were during the preaching, and to hear them join heartily and audibly in the responses in the services on the leaflets.”

“Many men were so profoundly impressed with the great necessity of prayer, that they asked me to pray to God to help them, to abstain from the use of strong drink and to quit themselves like men.”

“Among my hearers were professional men who were so unfortunate as to fall victims to the morphine or opium habit, and were, through the solicitation of friends, committed to save them from utter ruin. Penury led others to beg, and because they begged they were arrested and confined in prison.”

“I urged my hearers to possess the mind of Christ, which will command and restrain all fleshly impulses and move them to desire only that which will please God.”

“At my request the City Mission Society furnished temporarily many of the discharged prisoners with food, shelter, clothing and employment, and thus gave exhibition of the practical charity which Christ Himself preached, clearly showing that the Society attends to the whole man— his material as well as his spiritual wants.”

“The Warden and keepers treated your missionary with the greatest courtesy.”

“The prisoners are indebted to the City Mission Society for twenty-seven pairs of spectacles, ten New Testaments, three Bibles, four Prayer Books and reading matter. These gifts made the hearts of the recipients glad, and showed them that although they were in prison, yet they were not forgotten by the followers of Christ, “Who went about doing good.”

Average census for the year	213
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Average attendance for the year	35
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Again, for 1901-1902, Fr. Forbes now writes of the establishment of a Reform School on the Island:

“Since my last annual report, a reform school, consisting of sixty-eight boys, has been established on Hart’s Island. The school has been organized with two sessions. Half of the boys attend in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. Periods of work and recreation are provided for the sections alternately with the periods of instruction. Many of the boys attend the service, which is held every Sunday afternoon. Besides the spiritual care of the boys, it is my duty and privilege to preach to all sorts and conditions of men, who are committed to this branch of the Workhouse. Thanks are due to Mrs. Bartels, who acts as organist, and to Mrs. Kane and Mr. and Mrs. Kelly, who lead the singing.”

“The Society has furnished the prisoners during the year with Hymnals, Prayer Books, New Testaments, Bibles, and copies of the Gospels in raised letters for the blind. Many discharged prisoners were afforded temporary relief and shelter.”

Average census for the year	243
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Average attendance at the services for the year	44
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In the March 1902 issue of "The Mission News" the Rev. George F. Nelson, superintendent of the City Mission Society reports on another visit to Hart's Island.

On the occasion of my last visit to Hart's Island I was more than ever impressed by the fact that as "all that glitters is not gold," so all is not dross that wears prison garb.

*Hart's Island, situated in Long Island Sound, opposite Glen Island, is our "Potter's Field," and we are told that one hundred and twenty thousand persons are buried in the unmarked graves of that city of the dead. There is at present a branch workhouse on the island, containing about two hundred and twenty prisoners, who are set to work chiefly as grave diggers. These men are detailed for this purpose out of the large number of prisoners that are sent to the Workhouse on Blackwell's Island.*

On my arrival at the building in one of the rooms of which our religious service was to be held I noticed in a group of prisoners near the entrance nine men leaning on crutches. Four of these prisoners were one-legged. About sixty persons came to the service. Young men and old, white and black, robust and crippled were there. The faces of some of them were frank and intelligent, but most of them looked stupid and ignorant. All of them, however, preserved an attentive and respectful, if not a reverent, demeanor throughout the service. They sang heartily, and most of them made responses according to the printed leaflet in their hands.

Before I came away my attention was specially called to one of the men who was certainly out of place in that motley gathering. He was a French Canadian twenty-seven years of age, tall and strong, with a clear and manly face. He said he was an experienced barber. He had gone to Australia, and while there, working at his trade, he was touched and impressed by what he heard of the good opportunities in New York. If he did not see in his mind's eye that this metropolis was a great harvest field ripe for his razor scythe, he at least believed that he could better his fortune by coming here. Not having any savings he shipped before the mast in a sailing vessel by way of Chili. On his arrival here his clothing—after ten months' service as a sailor—seemed somewhat shabby, and probably its appearance had something to do with his failure to find work. He spent two weeks searching for employment. During that time he did not sleep in a bed for a single night. He never begged in the street. When his hunger became clamorous he went into a restaurant or bakery and asked for something to eat. One cold night he found himself so weak that he feared it would be fatal to remain in the open air. He sought shelter at a police station, but it was refused. On the following day, chilled and half starved, he asked for permission to rest a while in another police station. The sergeant saw at a glance that the man was in a distressing condition. He sent a policeman out for food, but the homeless stranger was at first too weak and faint to eat it. After a rest of some hours at the police station he requested one of the policemen on duty there to conduct him to a police court in order that he might beg the privilege of being sent to the Workhouse to keep from freezing or starving. The magistrate heard the pitiful story and granted the strange request; and so the friendless wanderer soon found himself in prison garb. I verified his statement that he was a prisoner at his own request; and it is needless to say that I have promised to do what I can to provide him with suitable clothing and to help him to find work when he comes back to the city early in March.

I mention this incident to remind the readers of The Mission News that all prisoners are not criminals, and to remind them also of the struggles and hardships which many of the unemployed class have endured before they have yielded to temptation and found

themselves in the clutch of the law. It is sometimes said that men who really want work can always get it, but it is not a true statement. I can give at this moment the names of twenty men who are eager to set their hands at any honest task however hard and whatever the wage, but who are hoping against hope, almost blistering their feet every day in a fruitless search for work.

It is not wise to give out doles to street beggars, nor is it right to treat every appeal in the street as if it came from an incorrigible vagrant. When such an appeal is made to us, if we cannot give it our personal attention, it is a good rule to mention the address of some well-known charitable society, such as the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, 105 East Twenty-Second Street, which has facilities for investigation and resources for relief.

The Rev. Arthur Forbes would continue his ministry to the Branch Workhouse on Hart's Island for two more years, while continuing his duties as Rector of Grace Church, City Island. His last two yearly reports follow.

#### Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1902-1903

"Among the changes for good at the Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island, during the past year, we must give a prominent place to the Reform School for Boys, the influence of which is already felt in the marked improvement in the general deportment of the pupils and their physical and intellectual condition. The discipline is firm yet kind, and everything tends to impress upon the minds of these young offenders, that a decent, manly, self-respecting life is worth striving for. Even a short confinement under such training cannot fail to leave its mark upon many lives."

"The demand among the men prisoners for more Bibles and Prayer Books is encouraging. This demand has increased since, through the courtesy of the Commissioner of Corrections, a part of the old Hospital has been renovated, and set apart as a place of worship. A service is held in this well-ventilated room every Sunday afternoon. Many of the prisoners have fine voices, and appear to take a real and heartfelt interest in the service. The average attendance is about sixty-two, a fair percentage of the entire number of inmates."

"In spite of the sin, the hardness, the callous indifference, which seems to surround one in the daily contact with these Workhouse prisoners, there comes now and then, some bright sign of hope, to cheer and encourage. Who knows what fruit our words may bear! And, as many of these men pass the threshold - free men once more - who, but God alone, hears the silent vow to lead a better and a purer life!"

"No life can be pure in its purpose, and strong in its strife,  
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby."

#### Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1903-1904

"During the past year the work at the Branch Workhouse on Hart's Island has progressed steadily. A service is held every Sunday afternoon in the old Hospital, and the attendance has been regular, although, as is to be expected, it comprises but a small proportion of the inmates. There seems to be a marked improvement in the boys of the

Reform School, as to their conduct at these services, their interest and attention.”

“Many of the prisoners when leaving the Island, or later, are furnished with clothing, and helped to employment, thus proving to them that we care for the physical side of their lives as well as the spiritual.”

“While the results may seem small, the ever-changing population making it impossible to do much more than start in the right direction, yet who knows what strength and help may have been found, or how often the blessing given, which is promised to those who are willing to seek?”

Evidently plans were in the works for the City to greatly expand the population at the Reformatory on the Island. The Rev. Henry St. G. Young assumed the duties as Acting Chaplain there, and his 1904-1905 annual report follows:

The proportions of the classes of offenders vary little from day to day. The bulletin for to-day, October 22d, is as follows:

“Males, mostly aged and infirm, 282; their offences are such as come under the head of vagrancy, men unable or unwilling to work, the homeless, the unemployed, beggars, etc., not many of whom are vicious, but all unfortunate. Not a few of them have been at one time prosperous, useful citizens, whom sickness and reverses in business and the weight of years have cast down. Females, mostly women of middle age, committed for offences coming under the head of “disorderly conduct,” and sentenced for two or three months. These on today’s bulletin number 35. Besides the aged and infirm males, the bulletin designates young and stalwart men as city cemetery workers and to dig the graves. Today they number only 88 men.”

“In the Reformatory are 218 classed as boys, varying in age from sixteen to twenty years, and in occupations from bell-boys to electrical engineers. These are most capable and hopeful of improvement.”

“The last on the list of today are three babies, born in prison.”

“There are 626 in all, of whom one-third are Protestants; the other two-thirds are Roman Catholics, save a few, not more than twenty, who are Hebrews, or unclassified.”

“For the intellectual betterment of the boys, there is a public school on the island, over which one of the city’s trained teachers is.”

“There are preparations for an industrial and trades school, in which the youth will be taught trades to enable them to become useful citizens. It will soon be under way.”

“The industries on the island at the present time are cemetery work, road repairing, kitchen gardening, stone breaking, and the usual house duties, cleaning, washing, cooking, sewing, etc.”

“In addition to the Sunday duty, I have been trying to visit the island on Thursdays, or, at least, on one week-day, but have not been always able to get across from City Island. Indeed, to do much good to the members of the Reform School, the Chaplain should reside upon the island all the time, or do so at least three nights in the week. He should have a reception-room, in which the boys and young men, whom the keepers and warden would commend, might meet, socially for improvement and entertainment two or three times a week.”

“The average attendance at the Sunday services has been almost one hundred; the deportment there at necessarily good. In the services all who can read join heartily in confession, responses and song.”

“Alas! Many of the aged men, whose eyesight has been dimmed by years and tears, need spectacles, which may the good Lord, send us. The Commissioner gives spectacles

to the mechanics only. I have been enabled to buy a very few. To be in prison, and in darkness, is almost death-like.”

“All hear the Gospel, many are comforted, and almost all purpose amendment of life. To three I gave the Blessed Eucharist, one of whom (an English Churchman) died in great peace, after long suffering in much patience.”

“On Hart’s Island will be established, it is said, a Reform and Trades School, to accommodate 500 or perhaps 1,000 youths. I think the islet is by far too small for that. But compression and oppression are the evil genii that prevail in the laying out and construction of New York City; witness downtown office buildings, twenty stories on each side of lanes or streets not fifty feet wide. The surface of Hart’s Island is not much more than 100 acres, one-half of which is occupied as a public cemetery.”

## **Part II: A Cross for the Potter's Field**

Mission News January 1906

Mr. Thomas McCandless has been elected a member of the staff (of the New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society), and assigned to duty on Hart's Island, where he is doing a splendid work among the boys in the new Reformatory established there.

Mission News February 1906

### **THE MISSION ON HART'S ISLAND**

Seventeen miles by water from East 26th Street, well out in Long Island Sound, lies that "ultima thule" of New York's penal system—Hart's Island. On this little-known and rarely-visited islet are located the Branch Workhouse, and the Boys' Reformatory. The Workhouse, in its scattered wooden buildings, houses approximately 500 men and 25 women. The Reformatory is overcrowded with nearly two hundred boys. Not one New Yorker in ten thousand, perhaps, has ever heard of this place, and yet Hart's Island has a peculiar interest, for here one may see boys, who have only begun a life that perhaps shall be largely spent within prison walls, and also ancient pensioners at the scant table of a city's charity—old men who look from the windows of the only home they know, upon their last long resting place—the Potter's field.

The boys are housed, in a separate building, on the dormitory plan; which means simply that two hundred boys can be and are packed into a building that should properly shelter not many more than one hundred. With no privacy possible, each boy must carry with him, wherever he goes, his entire possessions. So when our Sunday School class comes in, each boy wearing a heavy Turkish towel around his neck, in a hot and badly ventilated room, we recognize this strange garb as only a practical way of keeping one's property. "Dormitory" has a prettier sound than "cell," but the quiet chance for reading or study would be a boon to most of them—a boon that the dormitory system denies.

To a worker in this field, the task appears at once hopeful and hopeless—hopeless, when one considers these aged or crippled, bodily or mentally unsound, inmates of the Workhouse; hopeful, when one looks into the faces of these boys. The men have long since been cast aside, useless and perhaps dangerous derelicts on the sea of life. The boys have life's great journey still before them. Very few of them are deliberately criminal; the majorities are here because of bad companions or parents worse than none.

Under a law lately put into effect, a new class of boys, known as "misdemeanants," is being sent to Hart's Island. They are committed for a term of three years, but this may be commuted for good behavior, to a minimum of three months. These newcomers are being taught to work at making hosiery and shoes for the various penal institutions; and ultimately, it is thought; most of the boys sent here will belong to this class. Under a trained and efficient instructor, school sessions are held morning and afternoon; regular attendance is compulsory.

On Sunday mornings, we gather the boys for an hour of Bible study. They are quiet and studious, giving far less trouble than many a city class. At half past one, we have



afternoon service; and it is an interesting sight to see the long line of men, the lame, the halt and the blind, come slowly into the chapel. Then comes a division of the able-bodied men, and lastly the boys. All join heartily in the service; the hymn, if at all familiar, is sung with a splendid and uplifting zeal.

As this is the least known, so it is also the neediest of the city's institutions. The boys and men ask for reading matter with an eagerness that is pathetic. We receive, and distribute weekly, about two barrels of magazines and periodicals, which are furnished us by the Church Periodical Club. Among so many elderly men, there is a great demand for tobacco. And if this should reach the eyes of some smoker, who has plenty of this world's goods, let him bestow a little private charity. Five dollars a month would mean more happiness here than ten times as much could purchase outside.

The Chaplain is very anxious to secure the amount needed to hire a larger-sized gramophone, with twenty or thirty records, to give the prisoners now and then an afternoon's entertainment, which they would greatly appreciate.

"A very needy field," you will say. And it is. But it is a blessed privilege to work in such a field, to bear light into so dark a place, and to feel that, through God's mercy, even the walls of a prison may ring with songs of praise and thanksgiving for the souls of men redeemed.

Mission News March 1906

THANKS! – The prompt response to the request for funds to get a graphophone for Hart's Island, deserves a prompt expression of thanks. We are in a fair way to own an instrument, and have given an entertainment by this means. 750 men and women, boys and babies – which means every soul on the Island who could crowd into the Hall – enjoyed an hour of good music well played. We have hopes also in the way of tobacco.

Mission News April 1906



The Chapel at Hart's Island

*An Old Hospital Building a portion of which we are allowed to use as a Chapel. It is base, cold and uninviting*

Mission News April 1906

### MORE ABOUT HART'S ISLAND

When writing to the Churches it was St. Paul's mannerly custom to preface his letter with thanksgiving. If the readers of THE MISSION NEWS are to hear more of Hart's Island and the work being done there, they must first bear with our hearty thanks for their prompt and encouraging response to every suggestion of need. Ours is a long catalogue of mercies. We rejoice in the possession of a first-rate graphophone; that means a weekly treat to every soul on the Island. The Church Periodical Club is our mainstay for reading matter of all sorts. Several persons have answered our appeal for tobacco and for magazines. We have received a piano and a communion service. Altogether, our "cup runneth over," and Hart's Island seems every day less forlorn, less forsaken of the people of God. Surely THE MISSION NEWS may boast of generous, as well as "gentle," readers.

It is a pleasant duty also to express our appreciation of the unfailing courtesy and helpful kindness of Warden Kane. Himself a Roman Catholic, he has in every possible way aided and encouraged the work we try to do. The suggestions of such a man, at once a trained official and a devout Christian, are by no means the least valuable part of our equipment.

The work among the boys is, of course, by far the most interesting and hopeful. These are no depraved and desperate criminals, defiant toward God and dangerous toward man. They are simply boys who, born into families too poor and too ignorant to constitute a home, have never been given a fair chance in life. Many of them are here for no crime but poverty and homelessness. Now and then we find among them an ambitious boy who came to the city to make his fortune, and was picked up as a vagrant. Of course, there is a small percentage of out-and-out scoundrels among them, but the most of them are unfortunates, who have not yet found their place in life.

To them all New York City owes a home and training far different from what she so grudgingly gives. Our great, rich city abuses a good word when she speaks of her "Reformatory." These boys should be taught useful trades, taught the proper care of their own bodies and minds, made to realize that there is for each one a useful and honorable place among men, and not be turned out at the end of their stay on the Island as ill-equipped for life's battle as when they came here.

To be sure, the city has made one step forward in their treatment. The new class of boys, called "misdemeanants," is required to work at the making of shoes and hosiery, and a small class of them is being taught telegraphy. But simply to supply power to a machine that makes a stocking, or to cut endless pieces of leather by a set pattern, will never train a boy for useful toil outside prison walls. The ranks of labor are already crowded with those who can do nothing but supply the infinitesimal factor of intelligence needed in the running of most machinery. The boys should be taught plumbing, brick-laying, painting and such other trades as could be utilized in improving and beautifying the buildings on the Island.

But even under the present faulty conditions it is a pleasure and a privilege to work among these boys, to make them feel that they have in us a friend. Many of them are so terribly homesick! They write woeful little notes beseeching those at home to write them and to visit them. Some of their appeals would well-nigh break your heart, especially if you knew they would probably go unanswered, or result in a visit from parents quite unfit to see even their own child. And in this desert of loneliness and lack of sympathy they

turn naturally to us. A kind word will always unlock the door behind which lie feelings and yearnings too sacred for their companions' ears. To bring this poor, troubled soul to the Redeemer's feet makes a man thank God for such a task.

Less hopeful, but more exacting than the boys, are the men in the Workhouse; who are here for a variety of causes—drunkenness, pauperism, homeless vagrancy, and “wife cases”—the poor's substitute for the divorce court. In a separate building are the women, about thirty of them, mostly victims of drink. In the annex are gathered eighty or more unfortunates, largely elderly men, not a dozen of them in full possession of their senses. These men are absolutely out of place here. They should be in an asylum for the imbecile. They need nurses, not keepers. It is from them we hear always the pitiable request for tobacco. Fit for no employment, hardly ever allowed to leave their secluded quarters, their days and nights are embittered by their ceaseless craving for this, the only solace they can enjoy. Once a week the city lavishes upon each of them half-an-ounce of tobacco - enough for an hour or two. Then they begin to wait till the next week's allowance is doled out. But, thanks to the readers of THE MISSION NEWS, we have been able to add a little to their comfort in this way. It will doubtless please you to learn that your beneficence has materially decreased the consumption of their blankets, so often used in lieu of tobacco.

On this out-of-the-way island, set apart for a season from the glitter of temptation, God has placed these men and boys. They are a little Mission Parish, and for them we are responsible. We need not “go out into the highways and byways” for them, they are already gathered into our hands; they are in a mood to think over their lives; they can readily be made to see the error of their ways. To them the Church can now appeal as never before. The field is ripe for the harvest. But we are pitifully equipped for the work to be done. We summon these poor, wayward children of God to worship Him in His house, and lo! They gather in a place shamefully unworthy. Their very great needs, and our very great responsibility for them, alike demand a fitting church home. Are there not somewhere in this rich city, in the stewardship of some faithful servant of God, five thousand consecrated dollars wherewith to erect on Hart's Island a proper place for the worship of Him who “came to seek and to save even that which was lost”?

The 1905-1906 annual reports of the Rev. Thomas McCandless follow:

- The Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1905-1906

*Early last summer a mechanic left his wife and home in Chicago to seek employment in New York. His letters, at first, were cheerful and confident. There must surely be a place for him in the busy workshops of this great hive of industry. And then, like many another, he was sucked down in the maelstrom of the metropolis. The letters ceased. His wife sought him, high and low, only to find at last that he had died, after a single day's illness in a public hospital. His body lay unclaimed at the morgue for a week, and was then buried in Potter's Field. So, to her sorrow, did his widow learn what and where is Hart's Island. For here, on the far outskirts of our widespread city, lie the unknown and unclaimed bodies of those who came unwelcome and who died unmourned.*

Here, too, are the Branch Workhouse and the New York City Reformatory, or School for Misdemeanants. The former, in winter, shelters as many as 650 inmates. The latter contains on an average over 150 boys. In a separate building are about twenty-five

women prisoners, enough to care for the laundry and other necessary women's work for the island.

To the Branch Workhouse the inmates are committed for a variety of offences—desertion and non-support, drunkenness and disorderly conduct, but most commonly for vagrancy. The last named, like charity, covers a multitude of sins. For instance, imbecility—the sole offence of many—will bring us a homeless idiot to atone for his crime by six long months of confinement. The old soldier who comes with his pension money in his pocket to see the great city, and who is knocked senseless and robbed by the kind stranger who offers him a drink, may stand next morning, speechless and dazed, but guilty and a vagrant in the eyes of justice. The orphan country boy who makes his way by stolen train rides to the city of his dreams may be rudely awakened, if caught in the freight yards, by a six months' sentence for his crime of vagrancy. Bowery "rounder" and homeless boy, drunkard and petty thief, may all be branded with this convenient legal label and are all treated alike by the impartial arm of the law.

But, to realize how far apart law and justice are, come and look upon the motley company that crowds the Annex. These mental and physical cripples, blind and lame, old and sick, are but poor game for the huntsmen of the law. These men, who cannot care even for their own persons, are patients, not prisoners; they need nurses, not keepers; medicine, not law.

Or come to the Island Hospital and see worn-out unfortunates dying the slow death of senility, mumbling old men awaiting the boon of mortal sleep. They lay here, perhaps fifteen or twenty, cared for by the faithful physician who does his best, handicapped by insufficient help and prison diet. No fruit or flowers are ever sent to these uncomforted sick; seldom does a visitor seek this lonely room.

- The New York City Reformatory 1905-1906

On the first of January, 1905, a law went into effect by which boys and young men, between the ages of sixteen and thirty years, for such offences as petty larceny, were to be committed to the New York City Reformatory or School for Misdemeanants, on Hart's Island. But not till December of that year were any boys committed under the new law. Hence the latter date marks the first well-meant, but ill-equipped, attempt of this great city to care for a rapidly growing section of her criminal population.

The school is still in a formative stage; each new problem is worked out with small help from similar experience elsewhere, but that any attempt is being made to deal with this class of criminals is a hopeful sign. Something is gained; a definite advance is made in our penal ideas and processes, where correction aims at reform.

The system of merit marks differentiates this institution from similar reform schools elsewhere. By this plan, for good behavior the maximum term of three years may be commuted to a minimum of three months. Yet to anyone aware of what radical changes must be effected in these young men and boys before they can be called measurably, not to say permanently, reformed, it must be apparent that such a minimum term is all too short. To change the habits of even a plastic, unformed boy is not the work of ninety days. To fall into the ditch is the affair of a moment; it takes time to crawl out again and to remove the traces of one's fall. And so to send forth a boy three months from the date of his conviction, labeled reformed and re-equipped for an honest life, is unfair to the boy and unjust to the school. Yet there is great hope for the plan; the honest desires of the officials to further the best interests of the boys are a guarantee that its

ultimate success is certain.

Thus far, about 350 boys have been sent to the school. Of these, over 200 have been paroled, most of them after serving only the minimum term. There is now an average of over 150 boys, never over 20 per cent of them Protestants. The "various trades" they are taught, according to the hopeful prospectus, comprise at present the rudiments of painting and shoemaking. A plant for the making of hollow cement blocks is soon to be started, which will serve the double purpose of teaching the boys a profitable trade and furnishing material for much-needed buildings. Every boy, not a graduate of the public schools, is required to attend school for one session daily.

Beyond this meager curriculum, its equipment does not, at present, permit the work to advance. Such obvious reformatory training as the teaching of personal neatness and decent table manners is made impossible by overcrowding in an ill-adapted dormitory. The same cause prevents the boys from spending their evenings in any manner more uplifting than waiting for bedtime. Yet these defects will work their own cure. There will be, one day, a great school for reform on Hart's Island, where the city will send her weak and erring sons to give them a fresh start and a better training for the battle of life.

It has seemed best to go somewhat into detail in our description of the institutions on this Island, because it is a little known and practically new field for the work of the City Mission, and because to describe such a field defines very clearly the work most needed. And this precisely has been our aim: to know the inmates and their needs as intimately as possible and to befriend them in whatever manner suggests itself as most for their good.

What they all need most is a friend. The boys have too many of a sort they might well dispense with: the old men seldom have a true friend on earth. So it is our aim to be the friend of every inmate; to listen with what patience we may to endless tales of former glories from the old, to make these reticent boys feel that someone is helpfully concerned in their welfare. How often we are rewarded with the heartfelt tribute: "You're the only friend I have in the world."

Even to mention our work is to call thankfully to mind the names of many who have helped us, in various ways, to make this island less desolate and forlorn. It is our pleasant duty to acknowledge the continual kindness of the Church Periodical Club in sending us weekly gifts of papers and magazines. It is a gala day when the word is passed that "a barrel" has arrived. To the helpful interest of these ladies, and of many other friends, we owe it that we can always grant the pathetic request for "something to read."

Another source of much-needed aid is the Chrystie Street Home for Boys, and its head, Mr. Gilpatrick. Many a boy of ours has he sheltered and clothed and set to work. But for him many a boy would still be waiting for release from the Reformatory.

Nor can we ever forget in our thanksgiving the great number of anonymous friends who have enabled us to supply regularly the poor old men with tobacco. This may seem a very humble charity, but to remember and supply an old man with such comfort will not count small when the good deeds of many are written in the Book of Life.

Where there is genuine desire to help, the opportunity seldom fails. Almost daily, some poor fellow about to be discharged will assure us that he could easily find work if only he had some presentable clothes. The City Mission is ever ready to help in such a case, and to give him food and shelter till he does find work. Now and then a man is found in prison that has a place waiting for him outside. In such a case the judge will usually grant a shortening of sentence. In this way, during the past year about a dozen men have been helped to their freedom, and, so far, not one of them has been

recommitted.

On Sundays we have morning service at 10 A.M. and Sunday-school for the boys at 1:30 P.M. Both services attract practically all the boys and men as well as the few women who are Protestants. We are proud of our services, for our congregation is as reverent as and far more cordial than the usual gathering of worshippers. The Rev. Mr. Young, the former Chaplain, visits us on special occasions to celebrate Holy Communion. And it is but simple justice to testify that our chief equipment for helpful work has been the cordial affection he has inspired in every soul on the island. Our organist, Mr. A. J. Gethen, deserves great praise for his patient skill in developing out of chaos into inspiring harmony the musical part of our services.

*Since last May we have regularly read the Burial Service over the bodies of those unfortunates who are buried in Potter's Field. The city can do little for these pitiful relics of failure, except to give them a decent grave; the Church can and does consign them to earth with the same stately service and the same high hope of a glorious resurrection as she chants over the open graves of her own more fortunate dead. This vast and silent city, numbering already over 142,000 dead, adds to its census the body of one in every ten of those who die in all New York City.*

To work in such a needy field, among the poorest and lowliest of our humankind, is a sacred privilege. For here, in the lives of men deserted and given up as hopeless by their brethren, we are privileged to see the omnipotent power and grace of Him who's Gospel we are to preach. Our work is a very needy one; we have no fitting Church home; we worship in an ugly and cheerless room; we gather the lame, the halt, the blind and the diseased; but even here our hearts are warmed by the glow of the unseen Presence of Him who came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

From the 1905-1906 annual report of the Rev. Henry St. G. Young we read: "On Hart's Island I have officiated at two celebrations of the Holy Communion in the Chapel and administered to four sick in the hospital, and at five other services in Chapel and Sunday-school."

Mission News November 1906



The City Cemetery--Hart's Island--Popularly known as the Potter's Field  
Mission News November 1906

## THE CHURCH AND THE POTTER'S FIELD

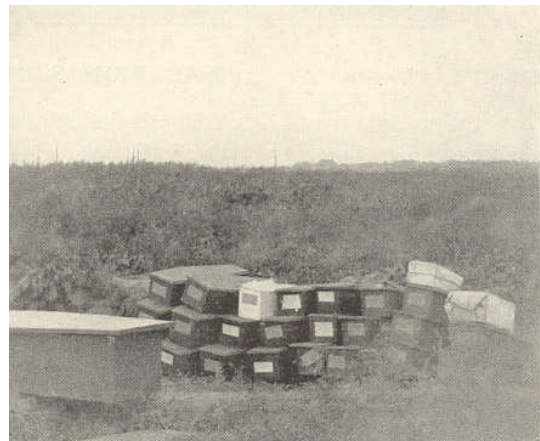
*"Perhaps in the neglected spot is laid some heart, once pregnant with celestial fire" –*  
Gray's Elegy

On wind-swept, sea-girt Hart's Island, to the left of the millionaire's yacht and the humbler craft of popular pleasure or commerce that sail forth into the Sound, lie fifteen or twenty desolate acres, the Potter's Field. Here are no stately marble shafts, no brazen epitaphs to tell the virtues of the silent dead. Unclaimed or unknown they died; and so the city has laid them in this unvisited and almost unknown resting-place.

Few citizens of New York could tell you where the Potter's Field is; fewer still have ever visited it, and yet here lie the bodies of over 142,000 persons, about three quarters of them children. And here, we are told, every tenth person in this great city finds his last long home. No matter that prosperity floods our gates with wealth, no matter that here opportunity ever points the road for ability and ambition, this silent procession steadily marches to an unknown and unlamented grave.

He is a man of no ordinary fortitude or indifference who can look dry-eyed upon these bare, brown coffins, huddled by the gaping trench. Here are the tiny bodies of those pitiable children who came to homes where poverty denied them a welcome. Others, more fortunate, have never breathed the breath of life. So many of them lie here, little wanderers whose life journey mercifully ended almost as soon as it began.

There, in a separate trench, the bodies of adults are laid in rows. "All sorts and conditions of men," for whom we pray, come here at last. Here is the poor battered and sin-scarred relic of the Bowery, the social Ishmaelite of our times. No more will the lights of his old haunts lure him to his undoing no more must he purchase his scant sustenance with the price of scorn. Here is the sad Prodigal who never returned, the man whose sin drove him away from home and friends, and whose pride made him seek the oblivion of crowded streets. His weary course has ended; the longed-for grave has brought him peace. And here is "one more unfortunate," the victim of man's cruelty and lust. Drunken and unclean she has been a sight to stir loathing and horror in the tenderest heart; now Death has composed her weary limbs and sent her soul to God.



"Huddled in the Gaping Trench"    "Here are tiny bodies of those pitiable children"



From many different walks of life, burdened each with his own sin, they have come to this gathering of the clans of those who failed. They have paid the common tribute to our common mortality; at our hands they need only the poor boon of a quiet grave, only that their bodies be consigned decently to the earth whence they came, and their souls commended to God.

The comprehensive purpose of the City Mission is to minister, in her varied fields, to every spiritual need. The foundling at Bellevue is baptized into the Kingdom of God. The people are shepherded throughout their lives; at death they are given the last Christian rites. As soon as the Society had secured a regular missionary for Hart's Island it was possible to complete the circuit of our work and give Christian burial to the dead of Potter's Field. The officials of the Island gave their hearty consent, and offered every aid in their power. The very prisoners who dig the graves were anxious that the service should begin. We wondered why so decent a thing had not been done always.

And so, since last May, the Service for the Burial of the Dead has been read each time the bodies are brought from the morgue to Hart's Island. To the visitor it can hardly fail to be a most impressive scene. The little group of prisoners, in their striped clothes, gathers by the trench. They are quiet and reverential in bearing, standing with heads bared of their own accord. No mourners weep for these lonely dead; no tribute of flowers covers them. But, over the open grave are spoken the stately words of our Burial Service as the bodies are committed to the ground, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; looking for the general Resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mission News December 1906

"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" was the contemptuous proverb quoted by Nathanael long ago. "Can any good boy come from Hart's Island?" might well be asked to-day. Like Philip, we will answer, "Come and see."

About a month ago, one of the boys on the Island came to me, asking if I could find him a shelter in the city for a few days. Though in the regulation clothes, rough and gray, of a prisoner, the boy's clear, steady eyes were convincing. Here was a boy worth while. When his time was up he was sent down to the Chrystie Street Home, where Mr. Gilpatrick took him in, fitted him out with clothes and gave him a home. Less than a week later he announced, in a triumphant postal, that he had found work as assistant janitor in a public school—hours, 5 a.m. till 11 p.m., wages \$20 a month.

Since then this boy has found work for two other boys who sorely needed it. To-day he is "hanging on," as he calls it, looking for an easier job, where he can attend night school. He's a splendid fellow, with the makings in him of a noble man.

Is it not worth while?

Mission News March 1907

### THE BRANCH WORKHOUSE, HART'S ISLAND

Tacitus speaks somewhere of "Ultima Thule," the "Ultimate Island," and the phrase recurs inevitably when dealing with that outpost of our city's penal system, Hart's Island. As for the dreary company of those who must owe their burial to our city's grudging charity, so to the pitiable throng here sheltered in the Branch Workhouse, this is indeed the end of things, the last home of failure and despair. On this bleak islet, as far

from the city's sympathy as from the hum of her industry, are gathered the wretched remnants swept aside from the human mechanism we call our city. Of this human rubbish the economist would, no doubt, tell us that we are well rid; that within these worn-out bodies may be hidden souls made in the image of God, is a matter, not of economic, but of Christian, interest.

Today there are about six hundred and fifty men in this branch of the Workhouse, by far the greater number of them old, helpless and homeless. With a few exceptions, they are here because they know no better place to spend the winter, because they have no other home. By the end of March they will begin to be discharged, so that by the first of July there will not be more than two hundred left. During the summer they will scatter over the country, to return like homing pigeons, to the city with the first touch of frost. Then, they know the combined interest of the policeman and the magistrate will secure for them a warm and comfortable shelter till the snow flies once more.

But let not the anxious tax-payer fear that the city is wasting his substance in maintaining open house for the country's incapables. This is no house of rest for the weary; this is a place of punishment for crime. And so the inmates are not paupers, but criminals. They are clad in prison stripes, fed with prison food. It is a sad commentary on a city's wretchedness and poverty that for so many hundreds this mean and scanty diet is an annual Godsend.

The able-bodied portion of the prisoners are housed in a separate building; to them is entrusted the work of the island—digging the trenches in, the Potter's Field, loading and unloading the boats, the laundry and the kitchen, etc. In winter there is not enough work to go round; in summer, not enough men for the necessary work. These are a decent, well-behaved lot of men, whom it is a thousand pities to see in prison. They represent just so much wasted time and energy. A little magisterial consideration and advice, a little "talking to," after the manner of a Dutch uncle, would have settled the domestic trouble that brought most of them here, and perhaps have saved a home.

In the main building live the other four or five hundred inmates of the Workhouse. And the pathetic thing about them is that with a few improvements in their diet, and a very little more of the tobacco that is to them far more necessary than food, they would be very fairly comfortable. But, of course, the city does not wish, and cannot afford, to care for the comfort of these unprofitable servants. She gives them enough to eat, of a sort they can hardly eat at all; she gives them almost enough clothing to keep them warm. But there are between sixty and seventy old men in the Annex who have not yet had any socks this winter. The needless suffering this petty economy entails is a disgrace to this big, rich city

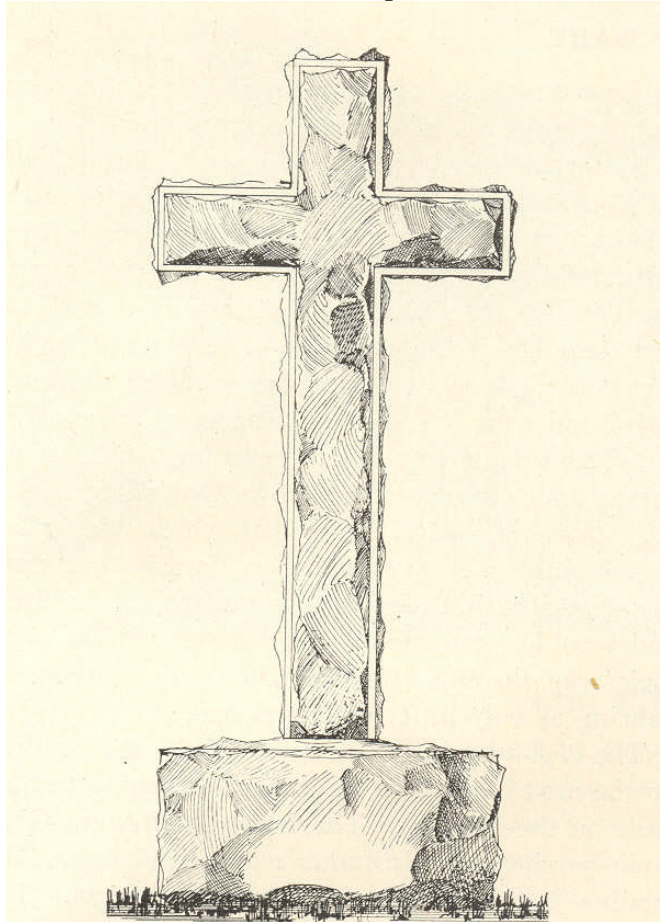
If they become ill, they are sent to the Island Hospital, where a capable physician battles bravely but vainly against the diseases rendered hopeless by vicious living and old age. Again, the loving care of the city for her unfortunates is witnessed here; sick or well, all have the same dietary. One sees toothless old men, trembling with weakness and age, mumbling at their coarse and uninviting food. Poor things, so many of them are doomed to die here, friendless and alone. They are grateful for the smallest kindness; their dim, old eyes lighten with gratitude at the merest inquiry after their health.

At the upper end of the island, live the women, usually about twenty-five of them. They do the laundry work of the other inmates, and in manners and morals rank far lower than the men.

In such a brief résumé, it is hard to avoid the impression that mission work among such a people cannot be other than dreary and hopeless. But He who told His followers to go into all the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature, has mercifully arranged

for a celestial compensation whenever His command is literally obeyed. For here, among the lowly and despised, you will find men and women who have traveled far on the road to God. And as, among them, you will find every vice except dishonesty, so you will find every virtue except economic efficiency. As the fellow-prisoners of St. Paul could testify, one may be in jail and yet be in very good company. And the songs of Christian triumph that, throughout the ages, have resounded from the prisoner and the captive, testify even today that stone walls and iron bars can never exclude Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Mission News April 1907



The Cross for the Potter's Field

An outcome of the public meeting of the City Mission Society held last January at St. Agnes' Chapel is a movement that has been started by Mrs. David H. Greer, to erect a monument on the Potter's Field that will mark in a fitting way the resting place of the city's dead and will stand as a symbol of Christian fellowship, showing that the people of our city wish to keep these unfortunate ones in mind, and believe that they, too, belong to the Master.

The necessary permission has been secured for the erection of a cross, which will be ten feet high, of rough-cut New Hampshire granite with a chiseled edge, and will bear upon its base the inscription, "HE CALLETH HIS OWN BY NAME".

Those who wish to join Mrs. Greer in this splendid movement may send their

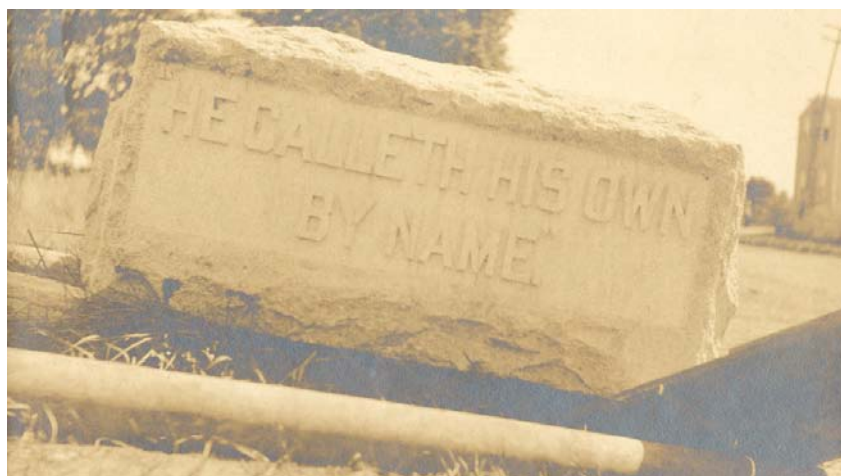
contributions to her at 7 Gramercy Park. About six hundred dollars is needed.

#### Mission News May 1907

The fund for the cross at the Potter's Field, which Mrs. Greer was seeking to raise, was quickly subscribed. It is hoped that the cross will be in place in time for it to be dedicated by Bishop Greer on the afternoon of Trinity Sunday. The usual custom is to have the annual Confirmation at the City Home for the Aged on that day, and many of our friends go to the service. This year the Confirmation Service will be held earlier in the afternoon, and the friends who accompany us – an invitation is extended to all – will be taken by boat directly to Hart's Island for the service there.

#### Mission News June 1907

It is greatly regretted that, owing to a delay on the part of the stone-cutters, the cross for the Potter's Field could not be in place in time to be dedicated on the afternoon of Trinity Sunday, as it had been planned. The dedication will take place some week day in June, as we cannot now give definite notice of the time, if those who would like to be present will send their names and addresses to the Superintendent, the Rev. Mr. Kimber, he will notify them by post. Cordial invitation is extended to all those who are interested in this good work.



Base of the Cross to be erected on the Potter's Field

The 1906-1907 annual reports of the Rev. Thomas McCandless:

- The Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1906-1907

Whoever is stationed as Chaplain at Hart's Island will recall with keener appreciation and fuller sympathy the perils and hardships of St. Paul on his journeyings for the Gospel's sake. We are spared the beatings with rods and the wild beasts at Ephesus, but the perils of shipwreck have at times entered disagreeably into the day's work. On more than one Sunday morning last winter, as we tugged at the frost-covered oar, we thought, enviously, that the waters around Melita must have been warmer than the frozen spray that coated us before we won our way to the island. Yet it was all worth

while. Here, among the poor and outcast, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in its simple and compelling power, appeals as ever to the hearing of the “common people” in all their need and sin.

During the past year the census of the Branch Workhouse has ranged from 400 to 700. Of these, excepting the twenty-five or thirty women needed in the island laundry, the greater part are elderly men, who return with sad regularity to serve term after term as vagrants. They usually keep away for the midsummer months, but the first touch of frost hurries them back to what is their only real home. So they are in no sense criminals; they are, rather, the useless hulks cast up by the sweeping tide of our city’s seething sea.

*The younger men, numbering perhaps 100, do the heavier work, such as digging the trenches in the Potter’s Field.* The new ice-plant, planned to supply the institutions of the different islands, requires the labor of many. These men are more active offenders against the law, and are being punished for disorderly conduct, drunkenness and non-support.

The most deserving and most hopeful of all the inmates are the eighty to 100 boys who are segregated in what has been, euphoniously but mistakenly, called the Reform School. This is merely part of the Workhouse where the boys are kept. Those not graduates of the public school are required to attend daily one session of the school maintained on the island by the Department of Education. This is the extent of the “reform.” Today two of these boys came to me and asked my help. They had come to New York, spent what little money they had, and finally appealed for aid to the Department of Public Charities. They were referred to the Municipal Lodging-house, spent two nights there and then, after being taken to a police court, were sentenced to six months apiece as vagrants. This was their story, and it is common enough to be true—an illuminating instance of the spirit and method of municipal “charity.” Just how six months on Hart’s Island will cure such boys of vagrancy would need a charity expert of the index-card school, in whose eyes men are merely “cases,” to explain.

In the hospital lie the twenty to twenty-five sick inmates of the Workhouse, and the ten or fifteen boys from the Reformatory. The old men, hopeless Bowery “rounders,” spend here the last days of their sad and forsaken lives. The boy inmates are largely victims of skin diseases, contracted—so they say—in our city prisons. Both need better and more nourishing fare than the ordinary Workhouse diet. So we have tried to provide a supply of cocoa sufficient to allow each patient a cup every day. We get enough jelly from the department, and enough white bread, to eke out this extra meal. For even so slight an addition to the usual fare, we need about \$5 a month. And the occasional kindnesses shown us by interested friends, in the way of fruit and flowers, are always most gratefully received.

To describe the field and its needs is to describe the work of a Chaplain. Broadly speaking, it is our aim to be the real friend of every soul on the island—not at all to humor them in all their requests and complaints, but to meet their real needs. In some cases, a little plain speaking is a true mark of friendship; in others, more tangible help is required. It is an everyday request: “My clothes are dirty and torn; if only I could make a better appearance, I’d be sure of work.” And it is cheering to note how many of our men go out to make a brave and successful fight against the temptations of adversity. Now and then, like a tonic for low spirits, we meet some former inmate who accepted his term of imprisonment as a lesson and then went forth to reclaim his manhood.

Rarely, very rarely, is some man found in whose case justice may well be tempered with mercy. During the past year, by interceding with the magistrates, the release of about twenty men was secured. Of course, it is needful to exercise the closest scrutiny

before undertaking such a mission. That in this we have been sufficiently careful is shown in the fact that no magistrate has ever refused our request and that no prisoner so released has ever been recommitted.

Lest such a chaplaincy might seem too secular, too busy with the cares of this world, we have tried to square our Sunday preaching with our week-day practice, and to transfigure love for humanity into love for humanity's God. Our services are reverently followed and shared by the inmates who worship with us. Mr. Gethin, our organist, renders invaluable aid in making our singing hearty and devout. On a few holy days, the Rev. H. St. George Young has visited us and administered Holy Communion, and on Trinity Sunday it was a privilege to present to Bishop Greer, for Confirmation, a class of three men, two women and five boys—the first Confirmation class on Hart's Island.

**Ed. The Confirmation took place at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd on Blackwell's Island May 26, 1907, the Rt. Rev. David Hummell Greer, Bishop Coadjutor of the Episcopal Diocese of New York presiding. Greer would become the 8<sup>th</sup> Bishop of New York the following year following the death of Bishop Potter.**

- ❖ **Five persons were presented by Fr. McCandless from the Branch Workhouse on Hart's Island:**

**Fred P. Lynch  
William Williamson  
Lloyd Carter  
Cora Beasley  
Sarah Jones**

- ❖ **Five persons were presented by Fr. McCandless from the New York City Reformatory on Hart's Island**

**Henry Hooke  
Walter Heitzman  
Edward Song  
James Martin  
Herbert Hayes**

- ❖ **Eight additional people were presented by Chaplain Beard from the City Home for the Aged and Infirm on Blackwell's Island**

**Benjamin F. Sargent  
Hugh H. Boyd  
John Fadden  
Benjamin S. Gompers  
Maxin Boyer  
Edward Wells  
Martha E. Ackerman  
Louisa Stokes**

*On the Potter's Field, during the year ending September 1st, the Burial Service of our Church has been read over the bodies of 5,345 unknown or unclaimed dead. We look forward to the early consecration of a beautiful cross, erected as a memorial to these nameless thousands through the kindness of Mrs. Greer and several other ladies. It will stand a lasting symbol of the sure and certain Christian hope of a glorious resurrection for all the children of Him who "callesh His own by name."*

To all the friends whose unceasing kindness has been our inspiration and support,

particularly to the ladies of the Church Periodical Club, we offer hearty thanks. To the officials also, for kindness and consideration that will always be a pleasant memory, a record of gratitude is due. And may the day soon come that sees the fruition of our dearest ambition—a chapel on Hart's Island, where erring unfortunates may find the peace that dwells forever in God's House.

- The New York City Reformatory 1906-1907

Nearly a year ago, the Reformatory was visited by an English clergyman who had been sent over by the Bishop of London to inspect our penal and reformatory institutions. After he had been shown about the place and had talked with the officials, we asked his opinion of our new attempt to deal with misdemeanants. His answer, in that superior English tone which, somehow, made our defects the more appalling, was: "Well, you see I have just seen Elmira; here you have only chaos."

It was all in vain to tell him that the Reformatory had only started; that it would one day evolve into something comparable even with Elmira, and that New York City had had no experience in precisely this line of reform. Again he crushed our apologetic with the obviously true remark that we should have profited by experience along similar lines elsewhere.

That was just judgment; but the year just ended has also shown some basis for our optimism. For we have progressed. To begin with, the number of inmates is now on the average 300, twice that of a year ago. And instead of the indiscriminate commitment of "boys" of thirty and boys of fifteen, hardened criminals and unfortunate children, we now receive only first offenders. So our standard of admission is a year higher. Again, to earn his recommendation for parole, a boy must now have 1,200 instead of 900 merit marks, a full month's extension of the minimum term. That is a step, but only a step, in the right direction, for in neither three nor four months' time can any permanent reform be affected in a boy's character.

There are, then, both virtues and faults in this new attempt to deal with a rapidly-growing class of criminals, whose offences demand and deserve some middle ground of punishment between the House of Refuge and the Penitentiary. First let us enumerate our good points:

1. The Reformatory offers another chance to the erring boy. The first misstep is no longer to close against him the door to honesty and usefulness. If he has broken the law through accident or thoughtlessness, he is here taught the consequences of apparently trivial breaches of morals and laws. If he has deliberately chosen the evil rather than the good, he is here enabled to balance the right and the wrong, and to make the right and logical choice.
2. The length of a boy's stay in the Reformatory depends largely upon himself. His own conduct, in his work and study, is the basis of decision as to the length of his term.
3. The head of the Reformatory, Mr. Van De Carr, has already impressed himself upon the minds of the boys as being just and kind in his administration. This estimate, coming from the boys themselves, means that in its head the institution contains an element of present and future usefulness.

So much for present virtues! There ought to be, and there will be, more than these. The boys should be given a training in the personal and social decencies that is out of the question with the present lack of equipment.

The faults of the institution are apparent to the most superficial inspection. Among

others, the following seem most to deteriorate the standard of the Reformatory:

1. The overcrowding of the boys in buildings that no money or pains could make suitable for their present use. Under any conditions, the dormitory system is an unmixed evil, but where boys are herded like cattle into cots only a few inches apart, physical contamination is unavoidable.

2. There is no proper system for the after-care of those paroled. The parole officers, Messrs. Bliss and Hogan, do good and faithful work. But it apparently was not the plan, in starting this institution, to provide homes and employment for such boys as has neither money nor friends. Hence, now and again, some unfortunate boy remains in the Reformatory for a period out of all proportion with his offence, simply because there is no one to promise him employment and a home.

3. Another fault that touches very closely upon the work of a chaplain is that the boys have little or no esprit du corps; there is among them no notion at all that the good of each is the good of all. Hence all their thoughts and plans centre in their own release; that their behavior after parole may help or hinder those to follow, causes them no concern. Almost none of the friendless boys who are helped by one or another to obtain their parole ever show any evidence of gratitude. They disappear at once, and make no effort to observe the terms of parole.

Among them, also, it is our aim to be a friend, with no preconceived theories of usefulness, but giving to each according to his need and our own ability. They all want the Chaplain to look up their friends, to write letters for them, to intercede in case they have brought upon themselves an additional term of confinement, etc. When a boy is found who is quite without relatives or friends, we find him a home and vouch for his good behavior, and thus secure his release. When a boy is paroled on condition that someone provides his fare to his home, our Ex-Convict Fund is called upon. Yesterday we sent a Jewish boy to his parents in Montreal. Most of those so aided have shown a lively sense of gratitude by returning the amount we gave them. And in this connection, we take pleasure in testifying to the multitude of boys from Hart's Island, who has been restored to honesty and usefulness through the Chrystie Street Home. Mr. Wallace Gillpatrick, the Head of the Home, works with me in this, and it is but justice to say that without his cooperation we could do little for the homeless boy.

In another report, our services, which are attended by all the Protestants, both in the Branch Workhouse and the Reformatory, have been mentioned. The presence of the boys, with their strong, true voices, adds materially to the brightness of the worship.

In the midst of all the crudities and faults of this new work, when progress seems doubtful and slow, we gain confidence and strength for the work in a vision of what this Reformatory will be one day. When our great city once realizes that the best is none too good for the needy, that the strength of the strong is best expended in the service of the weak, then the New York City Reformatory will be so equipped and managed that it will be a power for righteousness among her erring sons.

Mission News November 1907

The Rev. Thomas McCandless, for the past two years Chaplain at Hart's Island, has been transferred to Ellis Island to succeed the Rev. Mr. Campbell. He enters upon his new duties November 1<sup>st</sup>.



Mission News December 1907

From the 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society by the Superintendent the Rev. Robert B. Kimber:

*“More than 5,000 persons have been laid to rest in the city’s burial ground – the Potter’s Field – and over each one interred there the Burial Office of the Church has been read. No longer is their resting-place unmarked, for there now rises from the knoll, plainly seen by the passing ships, a large granite cross, bearing the inscription, “HE CALLETH HIS OWN BY NAME”. This symbol of the resurrection is the pledge to those who lie there of their heritage in the Christian’s hope.”*



The Cross of Him who redeemed all mankind, shelters in its shadow the nameless graves of those unknown on earth but numbered and named in His book of remembrance.

*“He telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names”*

The Rev. Thomas McCandless made his final entries in the burial register for the City Mission Society from Hart Island as follows:

❖ Oct. 20, 1907	19, unknown persons	Cem. Hart’s Island
❖ Oct. 27, 1907	168, unknown persons	Cem. Hart’s Island
❖ Nov. 3, 1907	19, unknown persons	Cem. Hart’s Island

Attachment I

The attached prayer by the Rt. Rev. William Croswell Doane, Bishop of Albany, to be used at the dedication of the cross, was sent to Mrs. David H. Greer at her request. It appears from a notation on the envelope in which it was found that the prayer was never used.

Prayer by Bishop Doane to be used at the Dedication  
of the Cross on Hart's Island.

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker  
and Lover of all mankind, Whose compassions fail  
not, we pray Thee to accept and bless the purpose  
of Thy servants, in putting this cross here, among  
these graves of the nameless and unknown children  
of men; that, as it shelters their dust in its sa-  
cred shadow, it may proclaim the message of His  
sacrifice, Who died upon the cross, that through  
Him all men might be saved.

Forgotten and forsaken of men, these, Thy children,  
wait here the day of resurrection. As their names  
are written in Thy Book of Remembrance, so may they  
be found, in that day, in the Lamb's Book of Life;  
and grant that with them and with all thy faithful  
departed, we may have part in the triumph by which  
Thy dear Son overcame the "sharpness of death" and  
"opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers".

We ask it in the faith and love of Him, Thy Son, our  
Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

## Attachment II

Attached is the 1907 contract with the Harrison Granite Company for the fabrication and erecting of the monument at The Potter's Field on Hart's Island.

This Agreement, Made at New York City, New York  
 this 27th day of March A. D. 1907, between HARRISON GRANITE CO.  
 of New York City, of the first part, and Thomas S. McLane  
 of 137 4th St. N.Y. City, of the second part,

Witnesseth: The said HARRISON GRANITE CO., agrees to furnish and set  
 complete upon foundation provided by said party of the <sup>first</sup> ~~second~~ part, in  
Potters Field cemetery, at Harts Island N.Y.  
 a Monument  
 of Granite Granite, in accordance with design Special  
 of HARRISON GRANITE CO.'S Collection, and which forms a part of this agreement,  
 the general dimensions of the same being 40 x 40 at base, and  
10-0 high

Base all rock.  
Cross " " margin front and back.  
 of \_\_\_\_\_ letters if furnished by party of the second part before \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ All the material and workmanship  
 to be of the best quality. The Monument to be erected  
 about July 1/07 or sooner, or as soon thereafter as possible.

And in Consideration of the faithful performance of the foregoing, the said  
Thomas S. McLane, party of the second part,  
 hereby agrees to pay to the order of the said HARRISON GRANITE CO. the sum of  
\$545.00 five hundred forty five Dollars,  
 on the completion of the work.

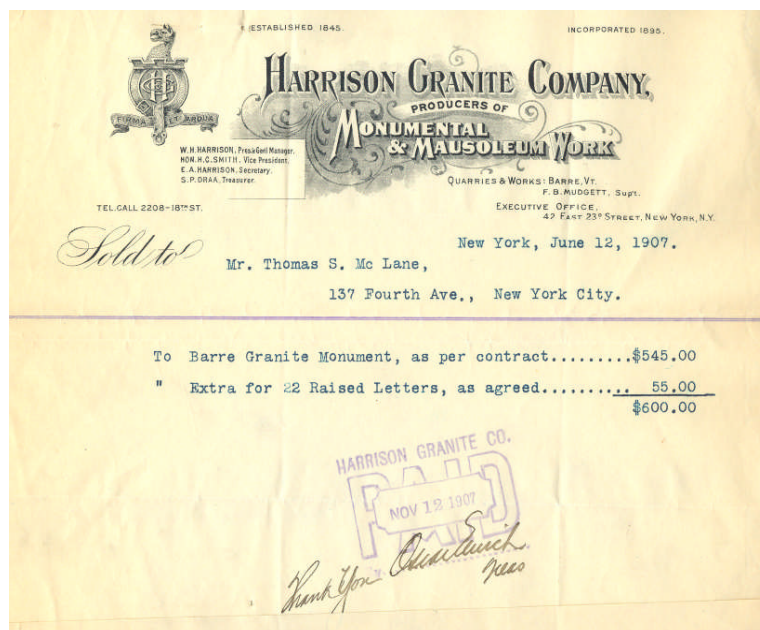
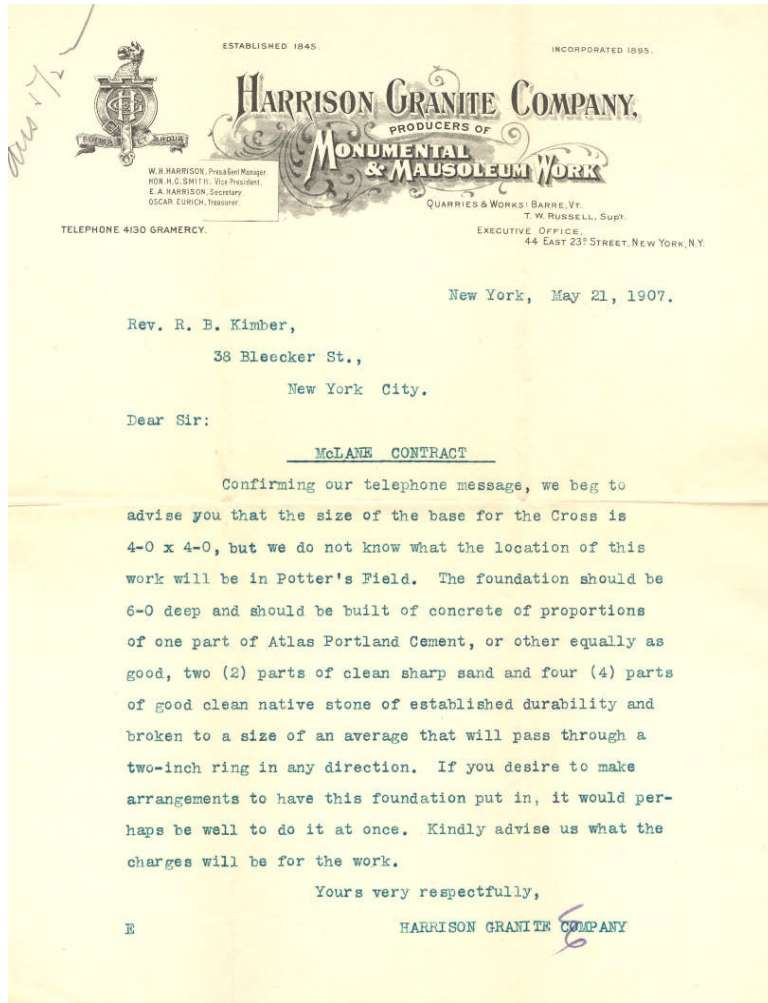
Party of the second part to transfer  
from the 26th St. property back to  
Potters Field dock.

Upon receiving personal or written notice of completion of work, second party agrees to  
 immediately inspect same in person or by agent, and failure to do so for ten days shall constitute  
 acceptance.

Where time is given approved notes shall be taken on Company blanks, bearing legal  
 interest. The said property contracted for to remain the property of the first party until paid  
 for in full.

HARRISON GRANITE CO.  
Joe H. Billings By B. Harrison





## **Part III: Our Field of Labor**

The City Mission Society now covered a wider field of labor than ever. The Rev. Robert B. Kimber, superintendent, reported in 1908 that “Our staff for the past year has numbered 22 clergyman, five deaconesses, four lay-readers, and thirty-five lay-workers, besides a dozen others filling minor salaried positions. These have ministered in our large field of thirty-six different stations, preaching the Word, administering the Sacraments, comforting the sorrowful, burying the dead, housing the homeless, clothing the naked, and mothering the children.”

THE CITY MISSION CLERGY HOUSE, 38 Bleecker Street. (1886.) Superintendents Office; Treasurer’s Office; Clergy House; Egleston Library for Missionaries.

ST. BARNABAS’ HOUSE, 304 and 306 Mulberry Street. (1861.) Temporary home for women and children. Crèche. Dispensary. Chapel, Daily Morning and Evening Prayer, Sunday-school and Bible-Classes.

GOD’S PROVIDENCE HOUSE, 330 and 332 Broome Street. (1893.) Day Nursery. Day-school and Kindergarten. Industrial School every Friday afternoon. Mothers’ Meetings. Girls’ Friendly Society. Boys’ Clubs. Cooking School. Girls’ Guild. Branch Penny Provident Fund. Reading Room. Circulating Library. Gymnasium. Services every Sunday evening.

THE HOUSE OF AQUILA 130 Stanton Street. (1833.) A Settlement House for the people of the neighborhood. Day Nursery. Kindergarten. Industrial School. Kitchen Garden. Cooking School. Girls’ Friendly Society. Boys’ Clubs. Men’s Clubs. Gymnasium. Bowling Alleys. The Chapel of St. Priscilla.

SARAH SCHERMERHORN HOUSE, Milford Haven, Milford, Conn. (1904.) Fresh-Air Home for Girls and Women.

CAMP BLEECKER, Milford Haven, Milford, Conn. (1903.) Fresh-Air Camp for Boys.

### **CITY HOSPITALS.**

Bellevue, foot E. 26th St. (Chapel of Christ the Consoler.) (1831.)

City Hospital, Blackwell’s Island. (1861.)

Metropolitan Hospital, Blackwell’s Island. (1861.)

Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane, Ward’s Island. (1861.)

Children’s Hospital, Randall’s Island. (1861.)

Harlem Reception Hospital, Lenox Avenue and 137th Street

Gouverneur Hospital, Gouverneur Street, corner Front

Fordham Hospital, Southern Boulevard and 182d Street. (1906.)

Willard Parker Hospital, foot East 16th Street. (1905.)

Scarlet Fever Hospital, foot East 16th Street. (1905.)

Riverside Hospital, North Brothers Island. (1903.)

Kingston Avenue Hospital, Brooklyn. (1905.)  
Nursery and Child's Hospital, 51st St. & Lexington Ave. (1861.)  
Lincoln Hospital, Southern Boulevard and 141st Street. (1861.)  
Skin and Cancer Hospital, Second Ave. and 19th St. (1904.)  
New York Home for Convalescents, 433 East 118th Street.

#### CITY ASYLUMS.

New York Infant Asylum, cor. West 61st St. & 10th Ave. (1861.)  
The Isaac Hopper Home, 110 Second Avenue.  
Asylum for Children of Feeble Minds, Randall's Island. (1861.)

#### ALMS HOUSES

City Home for the Aged and Infirm, Blackwell's Island. (1861.)  
The New York City Farm Colony, Staten Island. (1906.)

#### CITY PRISONS.

The Tombs, Centre and Franklin Streets. (1861.)  
Penitentiary, Blackwell's Island. (1861.)  
The County Jail, 70 Ludlow Street.  
Workhouse, Blackwell's Island. (1861.)  
Branch Workhouse, Riker's Island.  
Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island. (1897.)  
Jefferson Market, 125 Sixth Avenue.  
Essex Market, 69 Essex Street.  
Yorkville, 153 East 57th Street  
Harlem, East 121st Street and Sylvan Place.  
Fordham, 158th Street and N. 3d Avenue.  
House of Detention for Witnesses, 203 Mulberry Street

#### REFORM SCHOOLS.

House of Refuge, Randall's Island.  
The New York City Reformatory, Hart's Island. (1906.)

#### PORT CHAPLAINCY.

U. S. Immigrant Station, Ellis Island, N. Y. Harbor. (1907.)

#### CITY MISSION CHAPELS.

Chapel of the Messiah, 206 East 95th Street. (1890.)  
Church of San Salvatore, 359 and 361 Broome Street (1872.)  
Chapel of St Priscilla, 130 Stanton Street. (1833.)  
St. Barnabas' Chapel, 304 Mulberry Street. (1861.)  
St. Cyprian's Chapel, 175 and 177 West 63d Street. (1905.)  
Chapel of Christ the Consoler, Bellevue Hospital. (1831.)  
Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Blackwell's Island. (1861.)  
Chapel of Grace, Milford Haven, Milford, Conn. (1904.)

Charles P. Tinker would soon assume the position of Chaplain to the Branch Workhouse and the New York City Reformatory on Hart's Island. He was also assigned the additional post of Chaplain to Fordham Hospital. Tinker had been a Methodist minister for merely seventeen years, serving lastly at the Cornell Methodist Episcopal Church on 76<sup>th</sup> Street from 1899 – 1907. In 1908 he was confirmed in the Episcopal Church by Bishop Greer and began the process of becoming a priest of that communion. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1909. His term on Hart Island would begin with some hardship.

The following article appeared in the May 5, 1908 New York Times under the heading "He Dug His Own Grave". It is a terribly sad tale that speaks to the stresses born by the inmates who spent their days in prison digging the trenches in the Potter's Field.

"When the body of William J. O'Neil was brought from Hart's Island to the morgue last night it was learned that the man had committed suicide by throwing himself from the third story of the prison. He was despondent because of having to serve time."

"O'Neil probably dug his own grave. Prisoners at Hart's Island are employed at digging trenches on the Island, each trench with a capacity for 150 bodies, to be used as a Potter's Field."

"This one's for me, he said to a companion the other day, as he scraped away the dirt in one of the trenches. After services on Sunday he threw himself into the trench from the third tier of cells."

Chaplain Tinker's annual report follows.

- The Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1907-1908

A simple enough word – Workhouse; not so! For more ideas cluster around it than around the name of any other institution we know.

The term Workhouse, as used at Hart's Island, signifies all of the following things: A home for the aged and infirm, the last shelter for worn-out and run-out criminals, an asylum for imbeciles, home for destitute cripples, professional wanderers' winter quarters, hospital for the self-afflicted, temporary pound for despoiled veterans, retreat for the cure of the drug habit, inebriate asylum, home for wife-beaters, suicides' rest and hotel for the constitutionally tired. Many more conditions are represented, but perhaps this list will suffice. And all of these masquerade under the technical charge of vagrancy or disorderly conduct, for which the Workhouse is the penalty.

But the enumeration of this motley throng should not conceal the fact that a few choice spirits are found here. While the average of both morals and intelligence is extremely low—many being content to live like brutes—these rare exceptions are well worthy of the most careful and painstaking ministry. And there is a remnant of the image of God in all.

The province here of the Chaplain has been as various as the conditions named. When an old soldier has been robbed and arrested because he had no visible means of support, it is usually easy to place the man in a Grand Army Home. If it be a Confederate veteran the task is harder, owing to the poverty of the South and the scarcity of Homes there. But the case needs only to be a little widely known and some offer is speedily made. The

method is usually to advertise the need in some journal near where the man in question has lived. Northern associations provide promptly and well for these men, and the subject usually gives instructions as to the best solution of the matter.

Two months ago a victim of the cocaine habit was discharged after serving a six months' term. He had requested to be arrested in order to get beyond the reach of the drug, and had apparently broken the power of his evil habit during a six months' confinement. Investigation showed that he was from one of the most aristocratic families of a large Eastern city, that he had graduated from Harvard University, had entered the Medical School and begun a very brilliant record of scholarship. At length he read the story of "Sherlock Holmes," and for sport imitated his drug habit, using a fraction of a grain per day. By the time he reached Hart's Island he was consuming 125 grains per day, which only a giant constitution like his could stand. But he was reduced almost to the state of an imbecile. A more pitiful specimen of humanity it would be hard to find. Six months were spent with us without the use of any drug; his intellect became normal again, and at last accounts one of his old college chums—an editor of a metropolitan journal—had taken him under his personal care, and so far as we know he has not since fallen. His ambition was to gather his long lost family about him in a happy home.

Among our vagrants there is often found a man who has formerly possessed large properties; some who have been highly cultured in art, science and music; some who have been skilled mechanics; and others who, although indolent because lacking in aggressive qualities, have most amiable dispositions, and do a great deal toward making these conditions of living bearable.

Our Workhouse population varies greatly with the seasons. The maximum census is that of mid-winter, when it runs up to about 800, and in summer it falls below 200. Of this number, about one-eighth is young men of the pickpocket class and another one-eighth is addicted to strong drink or has been arrested for domestic disturbances.

We have quite a family of deformed men among them, who, after serving at summer resorts for a mere living wage, return to us year by year because they have nowhere better to go.

Not more than one-half of all our vagrants are fit to do any work worthy the name. Those who are, make ice, break stone, repair the roads, mend shoes, and work in the mess halls, dormitories and kitchens. The thirty-five women, who are housed at the opposite end of the island from the men, are received for the use which can be made of them in doing the work of the laundry, and of the several households.

All classes meet voluntarily at the weekly Chapel services, many of them composing our choir.

Our friends will be cheered to know that the foundation for a stone Chapel of ample proportions and Gothic style has been laid, and that before many months the religious work will be rendered much more efficient by virtue of this Churchly structure.

We desire to make acknowledgment to Mr. C. P. Bonnett, of New York, for his repeated and generous gifts of graphophone records, and to the Church Periodical Club for its invaluable donations.

- New York City Reformatory 1907-1908

There is no conviction more certainly fixed in the minds of those set to reform criminals, and especially incipient criminals known as misdemeanants, than that Reformatories do not in and of themselves reform. This applies not only to our city



institutions, but also to our State reformatories. Regardless of our industrial plants, methods of punishment—mild or severe—or even the most desirable cottage plan of dwellings, the fact remains that all these modes of treatment are inadequate apart from the grace of God—and that special form of God's grace, where a man, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, sees himself as God sees him, deeply loathes his criminal qualities and turns from them forever, and gains a happy love of the good for its own sake as a substitute for the lustful affections which dragged him down to his degradation. And unless this more than subjective change is wrought in the misdemeanant by the mighty power of God, through no superficial process, with the consequent good conduct of a well-ordered life, we fail to believe that the Reformatory has done its work, or that it has begun to do its work, in a permanently effective way. On the other hand, this spiritual conversion may be largely rendered inoperative unless some reformatory methods are added thereto. Even with all these things presupposed, every case does not result uniformly well. And there is the greatest need for spiritual and moral culture and industrial encouragement after the prison term has expired; hence the need for the largest and most intelligent cooperation between all the friends of the offenders and the particular usefulness of Chaplains in our reformatory institutions.

It will be remembered that the City Reformatory on Hart's Island includes from 100 to 300 young men, the average length of whose term is three months—a term thought to be inadequate, although perhaps preferable to a longer one amid such imperfect surroundings if better conditions can be provided by our system of parole. But it must not be supposed that these young men—most of them under twenty—are equally guilty before the law or before the moral code. Now and then we have proven that an inmate had been perfectly innocent of any offence, has kept himself pure while serving an unjust sentence, and upon release has resumed his place in the business world without special damage to his character or reputation. But these are extremely rare. Almost all, however, have committed comparatively light offences; while here and there a young culprit will be found who has escaped Sing Sing only to go there later after fuller evidence has been gathered of his crimes. But we have thus far failed to find one soul among them whose heart has not responded to genuine and affectionate interest; and some of the most discouraging and apparently hopeless have been seen to turn, and, with full purpose of heart, to undertake the long fight for a perfect manhood. And they are to-day standing well where a few months ago they would not have had much, if any, disposition to change their standards of living. Still, it must be confessed that only a small percentage of those coming to the Reformatory leave it reformed, although in time there may be solid forces at work which will reclaim them.

It has seemed vital to the authorities and to us that something more should be done to break the spell of degrading conversation in secret moments among the boys. And to this end we have begun to present a Lyceum Course of carefully selected entertainments and lectures. These attractions occur on the last Saturday afternoon of each month through the winter season, and some distinguished citizen of New York presides in turn, delivering a suitable, though brief, address. The latest discovery made in the interest of boys going out from us is the Harlem Home for Homeless Boys, where we have been able, through the kindness of the Superintendent, Mr. H. C. Eva, to supply a Christian home for orphaned youths. It is reported that 80 per cent of all boys received have done well in their moral and business career afterward. Those we have sent there are still standing well. One of our former Chaplains longed and labored for *esprit du corps* at the Reformatory. Now his work is bearing fruit. The tradition has been established, and proof is furnished that there is concerted action in Bible study, in rebuking profanity and stories of crime among the

boys themselves, and a pride in the after careers of the graduates. Yet much remains to be done in this direction.

As time goes on the Chaplains are less and less inclined to exert their influence in obtaining releases for young men whose terms have not yet expired, although the Magistrates and Board of Parole are most deferential toward us when we make the appeal.

No small advance is being made in the co-operation of parents—many of whom have not been half awake as to their responsibility for their boys. And scarcely a day goes by without some token of the fruitfulness of the Reformatory's work. Repeatedly, a graduate calls upon the Chaplain to thank him for the "new start" which he has received, through some word of conversation or sermon. Again and again they have stopped us on the ferryboat, on the streets of New York, far uptown or far downtown, on the surface lines and in the subway, and have exclaimed: "We do not look quite like we did at Hart's, do we? Now our parents are kinder to us, and perhaps we are more faithful to them; we are slicked up a bit and have a job now; it is not all we are working for, but it will do until we earn our promotion." One of this class of youths (who was sent to us for having too much sport with his employer's automobile) has become chauffeur again, has saved his money, and with the help of a small mortgage has bought a motor boat, will pay off the mortgage in three months and then will be the sole owner of a small property amounting to \$1,500. His lesson on the island seems to have taken complete effect.

An Alumni Association is springing up among these young men—the better element of them—and one has volunteered to help furnish a reading room for the youths who are yet to come there.

More than once a week some grateful parent writes from this or some other city or town, saying: "Command me if I can ever help you in your good work at Hart's Island."

Within a month we have been able to return a son to his family in Chicago. The boy has done well, is now employed by the American Express Company and, as a token of gratitude, the father has sent a donation to the Fourth of July Entertainment Fund, when these boys for a brief moment are encouraged to forget all their troubles.

Business men have already offered to make openings for our graduates, and in one case a farmer in New Jersey has promised to take one of them almost any time we see fit to send him.

But the best of all "after treatment" (next to that of the lad's own family) is the personal care of some city Rector whose church is near the boy's home, who will personally become responsible for his proper moral and spiritual care and who will use some "big brother" of his Men's Club as his friendly leader.

The Editor of the Boston Record, during a recent visit to our island, concluded his observations by saying: "That is the kind of work which pays."

Let the reader not forget the Building Fund of the Hart's Island Chapel. And let it not be forgotten that the Reformatory boys have thus far made every stone and put it in place, and they feel that the Protestant Chapel, which will soon be a thing of great honor and beauty, is theirs.

In early 1909 the Rev. Charles William Camp joined the staff of the City Mission Society. Rev. Charles Tinker would move on to work on the mainland at the City Prisons, and Camp began what would be a short tenure on Hart Island. Fr. Camp had been a parish priest since 1873. He served as rector of St. John's in Kingston from 1875-1885. From 1893-1908 he had acted as Secretary for the Mutual Reserve Life Insurance Company. His untimely death in July 1909 led to the appointment of Edward A. Bray, a

Lay Reader, to the institutions on Hart Island. Bray was a Presbyterian minister who had just been accepted as a candidate for Deacon's and Priest's Orders in the Episcopal Church. He had done work for the Detroit Presbytery at the McGregor Mission there. He would serve on Hart Island until 1915, having been granted a License to Officiate in this diocese by Bishop Greer in 1909. His annual reports for the City Mission Society follow.

- Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1908-1909

The number of men at this institution changes with the seasons. During the summer months there are from two to three hundred, in winter, from five to six hundred. The number is smaller this year than for several years past. The business uplift of the country is supposed to account for this, the men more readily finding employment. Idleness multiplies and gives keenness to temptation, and, no doubt, is a fruitful source of crime. Then, again, the older and less skillful of the employees are first to be discharged in dull times, and many of these, in their destitution and discouragement, give themselves up to the authorities that they may find food and winter quarters. Many are homeless cripples. *Other scores are weighted down with the terrible harvest, the sowing for which was done in former years; these are unable to work, and are eking out an existence, waiting for the Potter's Field.* Many are able-bodied and bright of mind, and are here for the punishment of their crimes.

We have a hospital and a regular physician. Under his care there are at all times between twenty-five and fifty persons. There are about thirty-five women at the other end of the island who are kept there for work in the laundry.

The Chaplain ministers to this varied company in many ways; he writes a great many letters for them, does many errands, meets them personally, hears their sad tales, preaches to them every Sunday, and tells them of the Christ who is "able to save to the uttermost." They are apparently appreciative of the efforts made to help them, and we feel that we are not laboring in vain.

One man, who has squandered a fortune, and in so doing has wrecked body and mind and sunk to the lowest depths, wrote his aged mother in Boston that he has found a new life in Christ, and as soon as his term expires he will come home and minister to her comfort as long as she lives. We received a letter from his mother expressing her joy over what has happened. Another, who had become a common drunkard, had lost his position and was estranged from his family, was released some time ago. Before leaving he assured me that he would endeavor to live a Christian life. I wrote to his former employer asking him to reinstate him, which he did. A few weeks ago a letter came from him saying, "I am working at my old job, and am living with my family again, and we are very happy." We might mention many other such incidents, but these are sufficient to show that "while there is life, there is hope." We have secured employment for some of the men and, as far as we know, they are doing well.

*The Potter's Field is here, and more than 161,000 are buried there. Using our beautiful service we bury about one hundred each week, most of whom are unknown.*

Many thanks to the friends who sent us a box of Bibles! They were in great demand, and we often find the men reading them. We have had requests for many more. The magazines are eagerly sought, and we are delighted to see a new box of them arrive.

- New York City Reformatory 1908-1909

The work was sadly interrupted this year by the death of the Rev. Mr. Camp, in July. In the six months of his chaplaincy he had won the love and esteem of the officers and inmates, and worthily so, for he was a pastor of rare gifts and graces. The remarkable consecration of his fine abilities, ripe scholarship and broad experience to this peculiar and difficult task was and is an inspiration to all concerned. It has been given to but few, to see so clearly the real conditions and needs of this class of people, and to apply with such dignity and simplicity that only and sufficient cure for it all—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His death was keenly felt, and his work there will not soon be forgotten.

My report must of necessity be brief and imperfect, since I have been there but a few months, a part of this time as substitute.

The number of young men at this institution ranges from one hundred to three hundred, and, under a new rule, they are never committed for less than six months. A system of numbers is used to indicate their deportment while there, and no boy is supposed to have gained his freedom until he has eighteen hundred marks to his credit. If well behaved they receive ten marks per day, and continued good conduct will show three hundred per month, giving them the required eighteen hundred in six months.

Large cards, giving a list of offences and the penalties, in loss of marks, are hung about the buildings, and no doubt this ever-present warning has a deterrent effect; but the young men work in gangs, and are thrown together in the dormitories, and, notwithstanding the fact that they are constantly under the eyes of keepers, it is not strange that they frequently transgress, and so lose their marks, thus extending their imprisonment, in some cases to a full year. Recently one young man lost fifteen hundred marks for a serious offence, and was obliged to begin over again. Last Sunday one came to tell me that he had “had a scrap,” and would not be released in time for Christmas, but must remain another month. His “scrap” cost him three hundred marks.

During 1908 there were four hundred and ninety-six young men sentenced to the Reformatory. Of these two hundred and seventy-five were Roman Catholics, one hundred and twenty-seven Hebrews, and ninety-four Protestants. Three hundred and sixteen were born in the United States; the remaining one hundred and eighty came from nineteen different countries, with Russia and Italy in the lead, the former furnishing fifty-seven and the latter forty-four. The figures for 1909 will not vary much from those of 1908.

The Chaplain spends three days per week at Hart’s Island, and a large part of this time is devoted to the Reformatory. The services each Sunday are well attended, and the worship is apparently hearty. The singing is especially inspiring, and the beautiful services of our church seem exactly fitted for these occasions. They are thoroughly enjoyed. During the past few weeks twenty-one of the young men have asked that they be received into the Church, declaring their determination to henceforth live a “godly, righteous and sober life.”

I was interested to learn that they had formed a sort of mutual aid society among themselves, for the purpose of watching over and advising each other. They had a few rules with penalties attached. Anyone guilty of blasphemy is fined a piece of bread, which is taken from his evening meal. For other offences they lose the remainder of the bread, or the coffee, or both. They are very much in earnest in all this. It is cheering to see these boys struggling to put their better selves in control. One bright young man who left the institution a few weeks ago, told his parents he wanted to be a clergyman, and

asked to be sent to college with this in view. The delighted mother wrote asking me to advise her in the matter.

The Chaplain has secured positions for many of the young men who have left the Reformatory. This is not an easy task. Six months at Hart's Island is not an assuring commendation. We have to just about guarantee the boy, in order to get him the job. This may seem a little risky, but so far not one has been untrue to his pledge. We receive many letters of appreciation from parents and employers, and from the young men themselves. These are our real compensations.

*We very much need a church building. At present we worship in a room used through the week for the purposes of the institution, and the men do not enter this place for worship with the thoughtfulness and reverence with which they would enter a church. Irreverence is a prevailing fault here, and they sadly need the lessons that such hallowed surroundings would afford.*

*Here is a fine opportunity for some one to build a memorial church "to the glory of God," and to the memory of some son or friend who has been taken to the Church that is perfect.*

We acknowledge the kindness of the friends who have been sending us the boxes of books and magazines, and wish to assure them that they are doing much good. We could use more to advantage. The friends, who sent the good things for Thanksgiving, will also please accept the thanks of all who shared in the feast.

Ed.: The need for a Chapel on Hart Island had been mentioned many times before and the Rev. Robert Kimber, Superintendent of the City Mission Society, would mention it again in his annual report dated November 9, 1909.

"At Hart's Island, with its Branch Workhouse and the Reformatory for first offenders, our services are held in any room that may be at our disposal. A small fund is in hand for a church, the site has been approved, the plans drawn, the foundation laid – and we have had to stop."

- Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1909-1910

Our census for 1910 has ranged from 550 to 650 men and about 30 women, some of whom have small children with them. One child was born in the prison. Fully 60 per cent of the inmates are Roman Catholics, and the balance is about equally divided between Hebrews and Protestants. The Protestants attend the Sunday services regularly. It is pathetic to see the half-hundred or more of these lame, halt, blind and deaf trudging off to the church service, often with locked arms, helping each other along under the leadership of the prison keeper. Almost everything that comes under the head of misfortune is represented—one-legged, one-armed, one-eyed, even some with no legs or arms and some totally blind. Some are positively loathsome because of their wretched lives, and are an awful illustration of that text, "The wages of sin is death." Most of these poor fellows are homeless and friendless and penniless. They have lost all hope and aspiration. What can be done for them more than to provide board, rough clothing and a place to sleep, and then to bury them at last? The world has said that this is all that can be done. Has the Church any message or relief for them? Is Paul's Gospel of dynamite sufficient to arouse them and shatter the scales from their eyes? Can they "as brands be plucked from the burning"? Was it of such as these that Jude wrote, "Some save, with fear, snatching them out of the fire"? I believe Amos, the prophet, had such poor wrecks in

mind when he wrote, "As a shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall Israel he rescued."

In the full belief that "He is able to save to the uttermost," the Chaplain has constantly assured these outcasts that they are wayward children, and that God loves them and wills their salvation. And we have not labored in vain. Just recently we were telling one of them of the "unsearchable riches of grace," and assuring him that he might share in it all, and he tremblingly responded by saying, "It is pretty nice to think He did all this for the likes of me. I would like to love Him back"; and we have good reason to think he is doing so. It was quite another type of man who came a few weeks ago to say, "Christ has found me, and I have found Christ." This man was one of the shrewdest gamblers and crooks in New York. He knows all about the inside workings of the "under world," and he assures us that when he leaves prison he will, by the grace of God, devote his life to the rescuing of his associates. We believe that he will be a good and valuable citizen in the days to come, and that we shall hear good things of him. Such instances, and there are many more of them, are very cheering, and do much to offset the very much that is depressing and discouraging.

The friends who sent the good things at Thanksgiving and again at Christmas time did a great deal of good. One old fellow said: "Well, they haven't forgotten us, have they?" The Church Periodical Club has helped us very much. We can use two or three hundred good magazines per week. We hope the supply will be continued and increased.

*During this year, using the beautiful committal services of our Church, we have buried 5,483 in the Potter's Field. This is about one in every ten who died in New York.*

We have written hundreds of letters in the interest of the prisoners, found employment for many, cared for the homeless ones, clothed some of them, and ministered to their good in many other ways as they requested and as we have been able to do.

The officials have been very cordial and have done much to make the task agreeable. Miss Baxter, the new organist, is deeply interested and is very helpful. Including the work at Fordham Hospital, we have made more than ten thousand visits during this year. All this has kept us very busy, but we have enjoyed it and find comfort in the thought that possibly some good has been done.

- New York City Reformatory 1909-1910

More than five hundred young men, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, have been committed to the Reformatory during 1910. The number present at any one time is about two hundred and ten. These young men are sentenced for what are regarded as the lesser crimes. Many are sent away by their parents as being incorrigible. A large number are accused of petit larceny; for example, one is there for stealing a bottle of milk that sells for nine cents, and he was a poor little half-starved waif. Others are committed for what might be called "boyish capers." The last Protestant boy that went there, not more than sixteen years old, told me that he was "sent up for six months for putting soap on the track." He explained that he put soap on the street-car track just for fun. He declared that it was his first offence, and he thought his treatment pretty severe. If his story is true all right-minded people will sympathize with him.

Some of the inmates are very bad boys; a very small percentage might be classed as vicious. They are sentenced for six months, provided they behave well during that time.

By misbehavior they may lengthen this term to three years.

At present there is no method of classification in use, and all grades of character work and live together. All those concerned think this is a grave mistake, and we are glad to know that plans are under way to remedy this difficulty.

The Branch Workhouse, with fully three hundred inmates, is also situated at Hart's Island at present. The young men of the Reformatory are often brought into close touch with these older and more hardened criminals, which is anything but helpful to the boys. For instance, the Workhouse men may use tobacco in any form, and as freely as they wish; but if an inmate of the Reformatory is caught using the weed in any fashion he loses 300 marks, which means another month in prison. The older men do not hesitate to slyly hand out a cigarette to the boys, and in this way get them into trouble. This is only one of many ways in which the Workhouse demoralizes the Reformatory. *Plans are being made for fine new buildings for the Reform School. It is expected that they will be completed in three years*, and it is to be hoped that when the new home is finished the Workhouse will be removed and the entire island be devoted to the Reformatory.

A new industrial building has just been completed, where tailoring; carpentering, plumbing, painting, cement work and electricity are to be taught.

Until within a couple of months there was but one school teacher on the island. Now there are three teachers, and, largely through the energy of Mr. Moore, the overseer, much attention is being given to school work. These improvements will mean much to the young men in the future.

The Chaplain has enjoyed a very busy year, working in many ways for the temporal and eternal good of the young men. We hold two services each Sunday, one at 10:30 A.M. and another at 1 P.M. These services are for all prisoners who wish to come. The attendance has been good. So far as we know every Protestant on the island attends when circumstances will permit. The worship is apparently hearty, and the singing is always inspiring and lusty. The preaching is always in the nature of a heart-to-heart talk. The visible results have not been as abundant as we had hoped for, but they have been sufficient to give us encouragement. We have assisted about fifty young men, on their leaving the Reformatory, by "signing" for them; that is, becoming responsible for those who are homeless and friendless, and by providing board and lodgings for many of them; and when necessary getting them clothes, that they may look and feel respectable; and, most difficult of all, finding employment for them. The parents and courts that, seemingly, are so ready to send young men to prison, have not sufficiently considered the burden they are putting upon these young lives—a burden that handicaps them as long as they live, not because the young men are less fit to face the world and make good, but because the business and social world cast them out as evil.

In accepting any favors from the Chaplain the young men promise to be true, and to live honorable lives, and, to the credit of the young men, it is our joy to say that less than ten per cent have failed to keep their promises.

Once again the Rev. Robert Kimber speaks about Hart Island in this annual report dated November 9, 1910 and makes an appeal to churchman everywhere for support of the work done by the City Mission Society. Here is an excerpt from that report.

The city sends its first offenders, under thirty years of age, to the Reformatory on Hart's Island, at the mouth of Long Island Sound. Their offences are largely those of homelessness and misdirected energy; they are not criminals at heart. They are there under an indeterminate sentence by which they may earn their release in three months, or stay until its expiration at the end of three years. These boys are our greatest care. They

earn their parole and return to the city to face life under the old conditions, unless we give them the needed help. Lodgings must be supplied, and proper clothing to enable them to make a good appearance when seeking for work. These chances for positions must also be found for them. They must be watched over and counseled. I would that we had the means to do more of it, for in such cases as we have helped we have yet to find any abuse of our confidence.

This must be more to you than a report of work done, because if it be the Church's work, you, as the Church's representatives, are responsible for its maintenance.

If your hearts are touched—as they must be touched—by the records of the unselfish ministry of our clergy and other workers to those who many times have no other friends, you must express such emotion in the form of visible support, by making it your personal responsibility to see that individuals and parishes assume their proportionate share of the cost of this work to those whom our Blessed Lord said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

- Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1910-1911

There are about 500 inmates in the Branch Workhouse. Forty of these are women, three of whom have children with them. There are fifty young men in the Reformatory of the Workhouse, who are known as the “boys in black” because they wear dark clothes, while the young men in the Reformatory of misdemeanants wear light clothes and are known as the “greys.” The two reform schools are distinct and separate and under different management. Why there are two reform schools seems to be hard to explain.

Of the 400 men in the Workhouse, fully half are aged and infirm. They are not criminals as a rule, but simply “down and out” and it would be more fitting to send them to the Alms-house than to prison. Many of them are cripples, and are unable to make a living. Several have lost both legs and many have but one. One has lost both arms and one has a broken neck and partial paralysis of one side. His head is held in place by several leather straps. He is not a criminal but a persistent beggar and is sent here to keep him off the street. Scores are homeless and penniless and friendless. Most of these poor old derelicts are the victims of the drink habit. The wives of some of them have sent them here for non-support. The earnings all go to the saloon. One of such met me and told me how mean and ungrateful his wife was to send him away. He said he “always used her well—never beat her in his life. All he ever did was to slap her mouth once in a while and yet she handed him this lemon.” The truth is that they have four children whom the wife must support. They are Irish Roman Catholics and I have informed the priest of their parish of their difficulties.

One went home a few weeks ago who was sent here for drunkenness. He had lost his position. The little home was gone and the family scattered. We supplied him with clothes and assured him that the Church was doing it for him; that God loved him and would help him. After some persuasion he lifted his hand and took a solemn oath in the presence of witnesses that he would never touch rum again. His wife wrote me that he had reached home safely and that they had rented a little home in which they had spent Christmas together. She said that though they had but little it was the happiest Christmas they ever saw.

I have asked many to take a similar pledge, and so far as I know not one have broken it. The pledge includes private and family prayer and membership in some church with faithful attendance. This is the only hope for these poor wrecks. Not all will take such a



pledge, but those who do surely win. Another man, who had been out of prison for about a year, stopped me in the street last week to tell me that he is getting \$18 per week driving an express wagon. He assured me that he is keeping his pledge and that he is saving a little money each week.

The attendance at the religious services here is quite good. Only a few of the Protestants fail to come at least some of the time. We have wonderful singing, and the interest in all the services is encouraging. We need a church badly. We worship in a dingy room which during the week is used for purposes of the prison. We keenly feel the disadvantage of this. Will not someone read the fifth verse of the seventh chapter of St. Luke and be inspired thereby?

*The Potters Field is also here, and during the year we have buried between 5,000 and 6,000. Ours is the only service held here.*

Thanksgiving and Christmas were brightened and made really memorable to the prisoners by the treat furnished by the Society. It was pathetic to watch the old men reach for the paper of tobacco and the box of candy, and to note how much they were prized.

Notwithstanding the many discouragements, we have enjoyed ministering to these unfortunates, and we have done our best to help them in many ways.

- The New York City Reformatory 1910-1911

The Reformatory is perhaps the most important institution of the Department of Correction, and the officials of the department realize this as never before. They are planning more generously and more wisely each year to meet the need and the opportunity. With a view of making useful citizens of the young men committed here, the authorities have provided industrial classes for them in several branches—electricity, plumbing, carpentering, tinsmithing, tailoring, shoe-repairing, painting, bricklaying, printing and cement work. The boys are required to attend school daily. Four teachers are employed for purely scholastic work. Singing lessons are given every evening by one of the inmates, military exercises every morning from 7:30 to 8 o'clock. From 6:45 to 8:00 P.M. the boys are permitted to use the library. There is a fife and drum corps of about twenty, supplemented by cornets. This corps furnishes music for the calisthenics every evening for fifteen minutes. Most of the above helpful exercises have been introduced during the past year, largely through the persistent efforts of the Overseer, Mr. Moore.

Five hundred and ninety young men were admitted to the Reformatory during the year. The average number present at any one time was about 295—25 per cent more than last year. The average age of these boys is about twenty, and they are nearly all committed for first offences. For the first time in their lives they feel the strong grip of the law upon them, and realize that when self-control and parental counsel fail, the Reformatory is provided as the stern substitute for both. We have been present when many of them have arrived at the Overseer's office, where their names are enrolled, their pockets searched, all their belongings taken from them, and they are given the numbers by which they are to be known while in the Reformatory, and they receive their first lesson in the firm discipline of the institution. A few of them face this ordeal with surly frowns, but most of them, with moistened eyes, seem to be dazed at the reality of it all. One boy expressed his view of the situation by saying to his chum: "We are up against it here, Joe. It doesn't pay."

The importance of the Reformatory lies in the fact that the inmates are young, and with proper treatment may be restored to right ways of thinking and living. Of course we

believe that the only real and abiding reformation is accomplished by bringing the young men into fellowship with God. The Chaplain has been persistent along this line, and the results have been gratifying. At Christmas time, while distributing the oranges, candy and other things to the boys, I told them that God had given them these things through His Church and that He had given them also His "Unspeakable Gift." When I asked them what acceptable gift they might give to God, several said, "Our hearts," and when I asked how many would then and there give Him their hearts and surrender their lives to His service, every young man responded by lifting his hand. If serious faces and suffused eyes are heart expression, no one could doubt their sincerity. So far as I know, not a single boy who definitely surrendered his life to God's service has failed to make good. Many letters and messages from those who are again meeting life's struggles out in the world tell of good positions held by the boys, who are now faithful workers. A few days ago one stopped the Chaplain on the street to tell him of his success. He pointed with pride to a fine automobile of which he said he had charge, receiving \$30 a week. Another went up the state to work on a dairy farm. Lately a letter came from the farmer, in which he wrote of the young man's good character and his satisfactory work.

Such encouraging reports make the work at the Reformatory more interesting perhaps than that in any other institution. Certainly these results are worth working for.

(Ed.) The Sacramental Registers of Burial for this City Mission Society show entries in 1910 for the Potter's Field similar to those found in some of the earlier books. Here is one such entry for the mass burials on the Island:

❖ July 24, 1910 190 Surname unknown; Cem. Hart's Island; E. A. Bray

- Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1911-1912

Affairs at the Branch Workhouse have been much the same as last year, except that there has been a change of wardens. Warden Kane has been transferred to the Raymond Street jail in Brooklyn, and Mr. Jones, formerly at the Tombs, and Mr. Walker are now in charge. The new men bring to the task many years of experience in this kind of work, and we are hoping that the old efficiency will be maintained and even higher standard of excellence reached.

The average number of inmates during the year has been 550, of whom about fifty are women. These women have quarters in a separate building at the head of the Island, and they do the laundry work for the institution. There are about one hundred of the younger men in the Reform School of the Workhouse. This institution is entirely distinct from the "Reformatory of the City of New York," which is domiciled in near-by buildings. It would be difficult to explain why we have two reform schools on the same island, but suppose there must be some good reason for it.

In the Branch Workhouse proper there, are three hundred or more men of all sorts and conditions; many of them old or crippled and unable to make a living. Some of these are there at their own request, and they have asked to be sent there because they have no better place to go. But few of the number have criminal tendencies, and we hope the time will come soon when these unfortunate fellows shall receive more humane treatment at the hands of the city. We are glad to notice an improvement recently in the prisoners'

rations, corn beef hash and prunes having been added three times a week to the former fare. The old men inmates are all very fond of tobacco, and beg the Chaplain to bring it to them, which he would gladly do much more often than he is now able if he had the money to buy it.

It is pathetic, yet inspiring, too, to see these poor derelicts marching to church. They range in ages from twenty to eighty years—"the lame, the halt and the blind." They apparently attend services because they want to, as they are not obliged to come, and a great many of them come to both morning and afternoon services. Many of them who cannot see to read are given glasses by the Chaplain; and in the services they are provided with Prayer Book and Hymnal. They sing heartily and respond earnestly. Many of them are members of the Church and they seem to greatly enjoy the privilege of worship.

There is a well-equipped hospital in connection with this institution, and a resident physician.

*The Potter's Field is on the Island, in which nearly two hundred thousand are buried. Using our Committal Service, the Chaplain buries about one hundred each week, and ours is the only service conducted there.*

In looking over the year's work in the Workhouse we find comfort in the belief that real good has resulted. It is a difficult task, but a necessary one. The Sunday services and the week-day ministrations of the Chaplain seem to be the only bits of light that penetrate the gloomy grind of existence for these poor unfortunates.

- The New York City Reformatory 1911-1912

This institution has been crowded to its utmost capacity during the entire year. It was built to accommodate about two hundred and fifty inmates and its census has reached the high mark of 350, creating conditions both unsanitary and exceedingly difficult to handle. The startling statement has been made that if there were sufficient room there would soon be a thousand young men there. This is really alarming. This institution, as a mirror, is reflecting the home, school and church life of the city; and it is discouraging to think that there are so many young men and boys of this type. Petit larceny, truancy, night-long revelry, refusal to work, and incorrigibility are the principal offences for which boys are committed, and we are told that all these are rapidly increasing. When we ask the reason for the increase we are told that absence from church and Sunday-school, nightly attendance at the cheap moving picture shows, the lure of low resorts, and the prevailing use of cocaine and other drugs will account for a large part of it. To these must be added the lack of substantial moral training in the homes and in the public schools. The Bible and the restraints of religion have been set aside and this sickening harvest is the result.

There have been many improvements introduced recently at the Reformatory, and we can feel that through the various agencies the institution is of real constructive value to the young men sent there. The Chaplain has found much to encourage him in his work there. The boys are not there long before they realize the seriousness of the situation they face, and are quite willing to listen to good counsel. They are eager to attend the religious services, and are very hearty in their singing and their responses. The many moistened eyes tell of the memories that are awakened and the deep regrets that are felt as the realization of the stern facts presses upon them. It is cheering to find so many of them seeking personal interviews with the Chaplain. In our week-day visits to the Island we

usually meet by appointment from five to fifteen, and hear from them frank confessions, stories which are revelations of pitiable conditions in homes, churches and communities. How much we need a real reawakening of religious life in our homes and churches! These individual talks bring us into close personal touch with the boys, and enable us to work to great advantage.

We hold two services each Sabbath—one in the morning at ten-thirty, and one in the afternoon at one o'clock. The morning service is as formal as it is practicable to make it, but the afternoon service is freer. We sing and pray and, after a brief talk, we invite any one present to come forward to speak to the Chaplain and make any requests he may desire.

Possibly the best service we are able to render to these young men is upon their release from the institution. Many of them are homeless and friendless, and they reach New York on the evening boat, often without a cent in their pockets, and with no place to turn to but the old resorts. We meet many of them, provide a suitable temporary shelter, see that they have such clothing as they need for a new start in life and secure positions at work for them as quickly as possible. We send as many as we can out of the city to work on the farms; and it is encouraging that, with comparatively few exceptions, those we help in this way make good. The many letters and other expressions of appreciation which we receive are among the rich rewards of such service.

If any friend reading this is interested, and desires to share in this work by helping to provide thus for any one of these friendless ones, such service will be greatly appreciated.

We have been focusing on the missionary work on Hart Island, but the work also continued at the other public institutions as well. Many of the burials in the Potter's Field were clients of these other institutions and the sacramental registers record, by name, many of those who died in these other institutions; among them the Home for the Aged and Infirm on Blackwell's Island.

An article from the October 18, 1911 New York Times is well worth citing here; its title, "City's Aged Poor at New Cathedral".

Ninety-nine of the city's poor journeyed yesterday afternoon from the New York Home for the Aged and Infirm on Blackwell's Island, to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, at the special invitation of Bishop Greer.

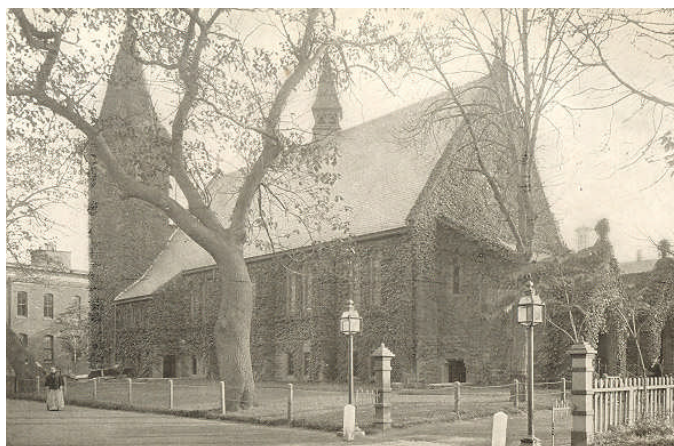
After the service consecrating the Cathedral was finished on June 11<sup>th</sup> last Bishop Greer took several of the young clergymen who had been ordained at the service to visit the city's poor on Blackwell's Island. In the little Chapel of the Good Shepherd on the Island he held another service and told the congregation that the Cathedral belonged to them as much as to any of the people of New York. [*Ed. This June 11<sup>th</sup> service was actually a service at which priests and deacons were ordained; the Cathedral had already been consecrated on April 19<sup>th</sup>. Alas, the Times got that fact wrong. This practice of taking new deacons to Blackwell's Island on Trinity Sunday following their ordination had been begun by Bishop Potter.*]

He is quoted as saying 'I wish you could all see it...Then he cried, you shall see it. You shall all go over and have a special service there'. It was this service that was held yesterday.

There were 55 men and 44 women, most of them near the end of life, in the party. They were taken from Blackwell's Island on the city boat Lowell to the foot of 116<sup>th</sup> Street, and thence by trolley to 109<sup>th</sup> and Columbus Avenue, where they were met by three big stages and the city's transfer ambulance, which carried the feeblest.

The Bishop's sermon showed his strong feeling that the Cathedral is the church of all people. "I wanted you to come here not only to see the Cathedral and hear the sweet strains of music, but I wanted to show you that it is as much your Cathedral as it is the Cathedral of any one in the city or diocese."

The Bishop continued, "I want you to have peace, even in sorrow and privation. The older of you may think life is all behind you, but it is not so my dear friends; the best of all is before you in the world beyond. If we realize that we cannot fall out of the arms of God it will give us peace and happiness and joy in our lives, and I wish to force this simple and profound truth in to the hearts of every one of you."



Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Blackwell's Island 1912

Continuing now with the annual reports of Edward Bray:

- Branch Workhouse 1912-1913

A very large majority of those in the Branch Workhouse are foreigners or of foreign parentage, about fifty of whom are women between the ages of twenty and eighty years. In the reform school there are usually seventy-five young men between twenty and twenty-five years of age, and the balance of the inmates, of whom there are about five hundred and fifty, are men above twenty-five years, some as old as eighty-five. These people are of all classes and conditions—the lame, the halt, the blind, the incompetent, the vagrant, the drunkard, and if there be any other classes of unfortunates they too are represented in this motley company. During this year we have had with us three lawyers, one of whom is a graduate of Columbia Law School. For years he was a vestryman in one of the Protestant Episcopal churches of New York City. A series of unfortunate circumstances led him to seek relief by the use of opiates, which soon unbalanced his mind, shattered his nerves and brought him down to vagrancy and a term in prison. He felt his disgrace very keenly. He was a constant attendant at the Sabbath services and was apparently a devout worshipper. He is out now and is trying earnestly to make an honest living.

Another interesting case was that of a big fellow, six feet two inches tall, broad-shouldered and lusty, a graduate of one of our great universities, and said to be the best football player on their team. He is the son of a clergyman and by profession is a mining engineer. I was told that when he behaved himself and attended to business he could make \$25,000 a year as an expert in his profession. He was always at the Sabbath

services, and often spoke of the kindness of the Church in providing services and other help for the distressed. He promised to live a manly life henceforth and to do what he could to help others do the same. He is in South America now, apparently doing well.

A man said to be the only one living with a broken neck spent six months here during the past year. His head is held in place by leather straps. He was arrested for begging. He is not a criminal and has no criminal instincts. John Kenny, a blind man, is now with us. Some time ago he asked me if I could get him the Gospel of St. John in Moon Print type. A letter to the New York Bible Society, stating the case, brought two large volumes containing the precious gospel in raised type. When these were presented to him one Sunday morning at the service, it was pathetic to see him put his arms around them and to hear him say, "And these are mine. I shall enjoy reading them while I am here. Thank you! Thank you!"

Another man has had both legs cut off close to the hips. He was trying to make a living selling trinkets, and declares he could get along if the police would not persecute him. He wants some clothes when he gets out, and when he was asked the size he said, "Any length pants will do, and I will never have to press them, for they will never bag at the knee."

The work among these poor fellows is interesting, and it is to be hoped, helpful. The requests for help are innumerable and various. The Chaplain has to be preacher, pastor, adviser, clothier, tobacconist, labor bureau, go-between, errand boy and many more if he responds to all the calls. Some of these unfortunates are low-lived and beastly, and are vicious and ungrateful, but most of them are very appreciative of what the Church is doing for them.

*At the Potter's Field here, where nearly two hundred thousand are buried, two burial services are held each week, using our Committal Service. About one hundred and twenty-five are buried every week, and ours is the only service held here.*

- New York City Reformatory 1912-1913

The Reformatory was built to accommodate 240 inmates. During the year the census has reached the high point of 370, and at the present time the institution is accommodating 325 boys. Of these, 52 are Protestants, about the same number are Hebrews, and the remaining 220 are Roman Catholics.

The work with the young men has been especially encouraging and enjoyable this year, and has yielded some inspiring results. So far as I know, every Protestant boy who has been paroled this year is at work and is trying to make good. This is more than I have been able to report in any previous year, and is a much better showing than can be made by the Workhouse. It has been said that 70 per cent of the people who profess Christ were brought into the Church before they were twenty years of age, 15 per cent between the ages of twenty and thirty, 10 per cent between thirty and forty, 4 per cent between forty and fifty, and only one per cent after fifty years of age. It has likewise been declared that 90 per cent of all clergymen were converted before they were twenty years old, and that this is also true of 75 per cent of all Sunday school teachers, and 80 per cent of lay church officials. The work with the boys and young men at the Reformatory thus assumes an extra importance, and in all the varied work of our City Mission Society we believe that none is of greater value than this. These boys constitute a most interesting and responsive parish. Many of them have had the most unfortunate home training possible. And after seeing something of these things, we marvel that the boys are as manly and as good as

they are. They are for the most part kind and thoughtful of one another, as is witnessed by an incident which happened a few days ago. One of the boys was leaving the institution, and his clothes, which were the same ragged outfit he wore at the time he was arrested, were very shabby and disreputable. One of the other boys offered him his suit, saying that he did not wish to see him go out looking so shabby, and declaring that he could get along without the suit all right. This is extra biblical, and this same generous spirit is shown when visiting parents and friends of the boys bring them fruit on visiting days. Invariably the boys share their treat with their friends and neighbors, and seem to be proud to play the host.

One boy, who has just passed his seventeenth birthday, has twenty-one burglary charges against him. At the time he was sentenced to the Reformatory, one of our good business men was present and spoke kindly to him. The lad never forgot it, and spoke to me about it several times. A month ago this busy business man found time to write to the boy and invite him to come to his office as soon as he was released. He said he had a position for him, and would be glad to advise with me from time to time. The little fellow is an orphan, and is wonderfully proud of his friend. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then Jehovah will take me up," and God is doing it through this good friend. What clubs and uniforms, harsh tones and forced obedience utterly failed to do, these warm rays of timely friendship will do perfectly. This boy already thinks of his past life with horror, and is looking to the days to come with a new conception of life. He will make good.

The Chaplain will be glad to come in touch with any other person who might be interested in taking one of these boys into his thought and care, and in helping to save him to good citizenship and to life eternal.

- Branch Workhouse 1913-1914

From four to six hundred inmates in the Branch Workhouse furnish a field of labor that has its own peculiar difficulties and disappointments—and also encouragements. Most of these men are past middle life and are hardened in their habits and in their conceptions of life. It is hardly necessary to say that their habits are far from the best, and their conceptions of life are meager.

They are mostly terrible examples of loose early training, or no training at all. They have lived in an atmosphere that is almost pagan. They have kept aloof from Sunday-schools and Churches and all worship. They seem to be as ignorant of Christian teachings as the Hottentot could be.

In our Sabbath Services the inmates of the Reformatory sit on one side of the room and those of the Workhouse on the other side. Last Sunday we asked the Workhouse fellows how many of them had ever read the Bible through, and only one could respond in the affirmative. Only two or three had ever considered themselves members of a church, and just a few said they were accustomed to pray. How well this explains their present condition!

Work among them is by no means fruitless. A good many have been induced to begin a life of prayer and this soon brings hope and cheer. Some have pledged themselves to stop drinking rum, and in a few cases they have been true to their pledges. More often, we are afraid, they have failed and many of them have returned again and again to the Institution. Trying to overcome some particular sin is praiseworthy, but if they succeed in

this there is so much remaining that is weak and vile to enthrall them that the struggle seems endless and hopeless. The Gospel with its “clean heart and renewed spirit” is the only cure.

We are trying to be faithful in preaching these great truths from week to week. The preaching must be of the most simple and direct type. Real heart to heart talks produce the best results. Last Sunday one of the women prisoners came to tell me that she was going out the next day. She said she had attended every service since she entered, and that she had been richly blessed, and was going home determined to live a godly life. Many similar cases give us cheer and hope.

Many of these poor people ask little favors of us. They want glasses, or care for a night or two, or clothing. We wish our friends would give generously to the “Ex-Convict Fund,” and so enable us to assist them as they go out to face the world again.

The census is about the same as last year, and is from four to six hundred. About fifty are women.

*In Potter’s Field we have buried each week about one hundred and twenty-five of the unknown and unclaimed, making six thousand five hundred during the year. The adults are buried in trenches that hold fifty each. In the trenches for the children there may be as many as two hundred and fifty in a trench.*

- The New York City Reformatory 1913-1914

There are at present four hundred and ninety young men in the Reformatory, of whom only seventy-four are Protestants, one hundred and five are Hebrews, and the remainder—over three hundred—are Roman Catholics. This large census is an increase of more than one hundred per cent, in five years, and is all out of proportion to the increase in the population of the city. Whether this is the result of a stricter enforcement of the law, or indicates a downward trend in morals it is hard to say. On one regular weekly visit to the institution we talked, by appointment, with a number of the boys, among whom was a newcomer pitifully wrecked by the use of drugs. This led to a conversation in this connection, and we asked each one how many of his acquaintances he knew to be in the habit of using “dope” as they call it. We found that these nine young men could tell of one hundred and ten other young men of their acquaintance whom they knew to use drugs in some form or other. This is astounding and if it indicates a general situation threatens to swamp all insane asylums and penal institutions. Commissioner Davis has been dealing this traffic some body blows, and there is a marked improvement in the institutions of the department. Smuggling “dope” in to inmates has now become a difficult and dangerous undertaking. I have been told that many children acquire the drug habit early, due partly to the fact that their parents give them opiates in infancy to quiet them, and this, when continued, develops the habit. Whether or not this can be considered as one of the sources of this wide-spread evil, the fact remains that the census of this institution shows the enormous increase already stated, in five years—and that the proportion of the boys coming there who use drugs is distressing.

Petit larceny is the most common charge against the inmates of the Reformatory, and this is often allied with the use of drugs as the boys think lightly of stealing to get a supply of the desired “dope.” The six months or more spent in the Reformatory is very helpful to these poor victims. Total abstinence from its use and a course of treatment prescribed by the physician, as well as the moral and religious influences brought to bear upon them by the Chaplain, has its effect, and when the boys go out it is usually with a



new standard for life and a resolution to keep straight and make good.

We have enjoyed the Reformatory work this year. It has been mostly with the Protestant boys, and besides what we can do in the regular Sunday services and in the weekly visits we have been able to do additional service in finding jobs for some of the boys when they leave the institution, providing temporary shelter when they have no homes to turn to, or getting a good appearance in applying for a job. With very few exceptions these boys make good after leaving.

A few days ago we lunched in one of the largest of Childs restaurants, and when we went to pay for it we were warmly greeted by a young man, the cashier, who is faithfully filling this position of trust. He is one of our graduates. The same day we went into one of the stores of a large drug corporation, and a bright young fellow came to shake hands and to tell us of his position with this firm. He said he had saved five hundred dollars since he got the position, and this is another of our graduates. Later in the same day, when on our way home with a friend, we met another of our boys delivering groceries for one of the Broadway stores, and he was very proud to tell us that he had worked for that firm ever since he left the Reformatory. To meet three such cases in one day is an inspiration. A few of the boys have failed and returned to the old life; one or two have been quite troublesome. At least ninety per cent are doing well—and to feel that we have had a little part in producing such results is no small joy.

The young men are faithful in attending Sunday services while on the Island. Many of them are good singers and they enjoy the church music. One of the features of the services is the soulful congregational singing. The New York Bible Society has supplied us with the Scriptures in several languages, and many of the inmates who have not read the Book for years, and some who have never read it, have opened the Bible. This has been very helpful. We need a chapel. Our services are held in a dingy hall that is used for all sorts of purposes during the week. This is a real handicap to us. We have a fine location selected for a little building, and are anxious to hear of some one who will build a memorial to the memory of some lover of God's poor, and for the glory of God.

The following photo of the City Reformatory, as taken from the 1913-1914 annual report above is captioned as follows:

#### THE CITY REFORMATORY, HART'S ISLAND

Here boys are trained for trades, citizenship and music, its large brass band numbering nearly one hundred skilled musicians



There has been frequent mention of the need for a Chapel on Hart Island, but needs existed elsewhere as well. On Ward's Island where 5,000 patients could be found in the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane, the Rev. Frederic White held services for 300 each Sunday in an amusement hall.

The Rev. Charles Tinker, who was now superintendent of the City Mission Society, along with his board, decided to build a Chapel on Ward's Island for these patients. The Altar Guild of the City Mission Society raised the necessary funds. From Fr. White's 1914-1915 annual report we read that the chapel was consecrated by Bishop Greer on the Friday following Easter day 1915; its name, the Chapel of Our Saviour. He was assisted in the communion service by Bishop Burch and Bishop Courtney. In the chancel, together with the Bishops, were Dean Grosvenor, Canon Nelson, Archdeacon Pott, the Rev. William Thomas Manning, the Rev. Charles Tinker, and a goodly number of the chaplains of the City Mission.

Fr. White continues, "This year has been remarkable for the number of new buildings erected on the island. A new home for nurses...and two new buildings that will accommodate 500 more patients...are almost completed...I think I have every reason to feel encouraged at the way the work has prospered this past year."



Chapel of Our Saviour, Ward's Island

In what would be the last annual report of the Rev. Edward Bray on Hart Island we read:

- Branch Workhouse 1914-1915

William T., who has been in and out of the Workhouse at least twice each year since I have been chaplain, came back recently for the winter. I asked him why he came back again and he said, "You see I am crippled and can't make a living. My father is dead and my mother and sister are cripples and I can't take care of them and they can't take care of me, so I have to give myself up or starve." There are many real criminals in the Workhouse, but a large proportion of the inmates are in some such condition as William T. They are not criminals, and have no liking for those who are. They say their prayers and are trying to live a Christian life. William T. is a member of the church. It is more than a pity that the State, or the city or the church has failed to provide comfortable quarters for such unfortunates where they will not be obliged to associate with thugs, and

be numbered with them.

The census has been very large this year. All summer long the place has been crowded. Usually there are fifty per cent less in summer than in winter, but not so this year. This may not indicate an increase in crime. The very large number committed on the charge of vagrancy may rather be the result of enforced idleness. Not long ago we saw sixty-two women and forty-one men taken from the boat and marched off in double file to the Workhouse—one day's grist. It was evident that a large number of the men were vagrants,—many of them were aged and crippled. They were sent to jail because they were homeless and penniless. This seems to be a reversal of the adage, "It is not a crime to be poor"—someone remarked that the city was the criminal in such cases.

We have about fifty women at Hart's Island; eight or ten mothers, each with a little child; one colored girl dying of consumption—several others are ill. Those who are able do the laundry work for the Island—most of the women attribute their downfall and disgrace to rum drinking.

The attendance at church has been really remarkable—practically every Protestant attends the morning service. The singing is inspiring and the interest shown in every part of the service is exceptionally good. Many have professed conversion during the year. We have no reason to doubt their sincerity. The good things sent by the Society for Thanksgiving were much appreciated.

*Using our committal service, and sometimes a short address, we have buried about six thousand in Potters' Field. They are the unknown and the unclaimed of those who die in the city.*

It has been a very busy year. We have come in contact with hundreds of pressing and pathetic cases and have tried to be helpful to them all. We hope some real good has been done.

- The New York City Reformatory 1914-1915

Our work with the young men in the Reformatory this year has been along the same line as in former years, except as it may have been modified by some stirring changes in the management of the institution. These changes include both men and methods. Overseer Moore was dismissed after a trial by a jury, and his methods of discipline went with him. The new Overseer, Mr. Lawes, has ideas of control more in keeping with the policy of Commissioner Davis. The new plan puts more emphasis upon the "Honor system" than upon strictness of discipline. The inmates are not to be treated as if all cast in the same mould and therefore all to come under the same rigid and unvarying rules, but as individuals with varying needs and susceptibilities.

Much attention is to be given to the boy's record before his committal, and to the circumstances which led to his downfall. While in the Reformatory he is to be put generously on his merit with the hope that he may the sooner "come to himself" and real reform be brought to pass.

It is the purpose of the authorities to remove the Reformatory to New Hampton, Orange Co., N. Y., where a farm of six hundred and ten acres has been purchased and some buildings erected. The plan is to make this a model industrial school where the boys will be taught some trade, and that this may be the more thoroughly done it is proposed that the term be lengthened from six months to one year.

A large number of the young men have been taken to the farm, and the others will go in the spring. This has greatly reduced the attendance at the Sunday services and has interfered with many of our plans. Attendance at church is no longer compulsory, but the Protestants, with one exception, attend as before. Good proof that they are not bankrupt as to honor.

The parole officers have done much more than in former years in securing employment for those who have been released and the Chaplain has been relieved of much of this particular work. We have given more attention than ever to the purely spiritual side of the task, and have seen some very cheering results. The only real reform for any prisoner, young or old, is to definitely accept Christ as Saviour and to live in fellowship with Him.

During the year we have come in touch with more than one thousand young men in the Reformatory, and we have endeavored to induce them so to accept Him and so to live.

[Ed. The Reformatory in New Hampton was completed in 1916 and the Hart Island institution is renamed the Reformatory Prison.]

Late in the year 1915 the Rev. William G. Thompson, Assistant Chaplain at Bellevue Hospital, would assume the duties of Chaplain to the Branch Workhouse on Hart's Island as well. We find no annual report for the work at the Reformatory in that volume.

- Branch Workhouse, Hart's Island 1915-1916

The work on Hart's Island has been carried on during the past summer under considerable difficulties, as not only the administration has changed, but the character of the institution itself has been gradually transformed until now it is the Penitentiary. This change has brought the men and women from Blackwell's Island, to live under different conditions, together with the shops and industries, in a place not fully prepared to receive them. The machinery of the Law itself has scarcely been properly adjusted to the new conditions.

The Chaplain has had many difficult problems to solve and many times has found his lines crossing those of the Chaplain of the Tombs, who has had many of these men under his care, in some cases for some time, and again many times. It has been a great help to be able to consult with and get the advice of Chaplain Watkins.

Warden Schleth was a ready and most valuable helper; we miss him and his hearty welcome and co-operation while we look forward hopefully to the advent of the incoming Warden from Blackwell's Island.

Mr. George Parker Doherty, who has made such a success of the Bible Class on Blackwell's Island, has now started a class here with every assurance of even greater success, if that may be possible.

Mr. Edwin Gorham has sent new Prayer Books and Hymnals, and the Bible Society and West Side Young Men's Christian Association have provided Bibles for the men. This is a great help in the service as the men and the women use them and follow the service closely.

Our Organ is a very poor excuse for a musical instrument, but Mrs. Baxter is faithful, patient, and persistent and what is lacking in the organ is more than made up in the volume of voices. The vim and swing given to the old Church hymns give a real character to the service in the shoe-shop on Sunday mornings.

What we want, and should have on Hart's Island, is a Chapel where in fitting surroundings these unfortunate people could go and feel the sacredness of the place as a place of worship separate and apart from all those things that would remind them of the daily round of their narrow lives, a place to lift their minds to some idea of spiritual things and the larger life.

Without doubt a little effort in the right direction will bring this about, and who knows what a living power and influence such a building would exert in the lives of these people placed away from their fellow-men upon this Island.

Let us endeavor to do our duty in teaching and preaching Jesus Christ and His Gospel, so that these men and women may realize in Him the Gate of Eternal Life and turn about, to make their lives better, while we pray that they may increase more and more in wisdom and understanding through the power of the Holy Ghost.

*Fr. Thompson did continue the practice of praying over the mass burials at the Potter's Field. His last entry in that regard is dated April 29, 1917 when 117 unknown persons were interred. During this period several ministers, particularly the Rev. A. M. Hildebrand on Staten Island, recorded name specific burials on Hart Island as well.*

By 1917 war work had preoccupied many and perhaps, with the increase in military chaplaincies, an ordained minister was not available for service to the island. In that same year Robert H. Law Jr. would be issued a Lay Readers License by Bishop Greer and on May 27<sup>th</sup> he recorded his first mass burial on Hart Island (104 unknowns) in the City Mission Society sacramental burial register. Mr. Law was a young lawyer who lived on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. He had been assigned the post of Missionary to the Branch Penitentiary on Hart's Island. We do not know more than that about his background.

From this year forward the City Mission Society no longer published the lengthy annual reports of its missionaries at each years end. The annual report of the Society was condensed to include only a report of the Superintendent and the financials. We are fortunate however to have the monthly Mission News to draw on for our narrative. The April 1919 issue would feature the following piece by Robert H. Law.

- The Branch Penitentiary, Hart's Island April 1919

One day the orders came to move, and a little band of cripples and derelicts started on a journey up a hill. The journey was away from a gloomy, dark, ancient, out-of-date building in the valley, away from the prison proper, up past Potter's Field, leaving even that in the distance, to a new home upon the hilltop. There, swept by the Sound breezes, shaded by beautiful, old trees, in view of Execution Point and Lighthouse, our halt, lame and blind found their new home. There is a garden to work in, the doors are unlocked, and it resembles a private sanitarium or hospital rather than a jail. Here they find rest with nature. Here they find time to think of other days as they enter the evening hours of life. Whenever our choir sings:

“I come to Thee at last, O Lord of rest,  
With wasted years, with heart and mind oppressed;  
And now Thy promise is to me so sweet,  
That I shall find forgiveness at Thy feet.”

I think of these men on the hill. They are always represented at the Chapel Service by about ten or twelve, who be the weather what it may, make the trip on crutches and with great difficulty from their house, a good fifteen minutes walk for a robust man, and after service, walk back again, this time up the hill. Why do these sick come to church if it is not to get closer to God, and there to find the rest and forgiveness of which we sing?

When Mr. Sidney Bingham and I started prison work, I remember the case of the first man whom we helped. A man of forty made the plea for a chance in life. He told us of his eleven convictions in twenty-three years, and he said that he felt that he should pull in the ropes, start a new life, and make his mother happy before she died. We gave him money, and secured a position for him. We thought that he had made good. Much to my surprise, however, while visiting the Workhouse a short while ago, I found our friend back in jail. Why had he returned? The answer is this: It is not only money and a job that makes a man go straight, although we all know that they are a great help, but it is rooting God deep in a man's heart. It is the bringing of the Master and the man closer together. This then has been my aim in the work on Hart's Island this year—God rooted deeper in a man's heart, trust and more trust, faith and greater faith.

I want the men to know that they can win through God alone, and I want them to know that, no matter how deep they have fallen into sin, no matter how low they have stooped in their walks of life, the power of God and His power alone will put them on their feet again, and make them worth-while citizens of a great country. I am not mincing words with the men. I am using straightforward talk, whether it is in the dormitories, during the leisure hours, or in the shops or in the fire-room alongside of the hard working stoker. The motto in our Chapel is “GOD FIRST.” The men must like it, for our services are well attended, I think better than ever before, and the men enter into the spirit of the service with great enthusiasm.

The work of visiting in the hospitals is continued. The men are supplied with the various necessities, such as eye glasses, study books, etc. Dictionaries have been placed in almost every dormitory, and Bibles and Testaments can always be had by applying to the Chaplain.

The men continue to improve and beautify the Chapel with the work of their own hands, and one of our prisoners worked eagerly at renewing an entire set of strings in our piano.

Great appreciation is due to Mr. Hadley, the Rev. Mr. D'Anchise and others for their service at this center between July and January.

Our hope and prayer each day is to bring our men closer to God and to usefulness.

In March of 1920 another Lay Reader, Mr. Charles F. Odell, would assume the post. Odell had been a life long Episcopalian within the Diocese of New York and had just been admitted as a candidate for Deacon's and Priest's Orders. He would be ordained a Deacon on December 23, 1920 and a Priest on December 21, 1922.

The MARCH 1920 issue of THE MISSION NEWS was devoted in its entirety to the “Correctional Institutions of the City.” Featured in the issue was an article by the Hon. James A. Hamilton, Commissioner of Correction, titled, “Reforming the Criminal.” In it we find the following:

“Within the geographical boundaries of Greater New York, there are eight district prisons, wherein those charged with crime are held awaiting trial. After conviction the prisoners are then transferred to the Workhouse or Penitentiary on Blackwell’s Island, the Municipal Farm on Riker’s Island, or the Reformatory Prison on Hart Island.”

“Hart Island, which lies directly opposite City Island, is splendidly situated. Here many of the important activities of the department are carried on. All of the wearing apparel for the inmates is manufactured by the prisoners themselves, which served the double purpose of lessening the cost of maintenance as well as teaching some useful occupation. At the northern end of the island “on the hill” is the home for the feeble and aged prisoner, who is no longer able “to do a day’s work.” Toward the southern end is a large, airy, bright hospital for those who have not only been convicted of crime but are also afflicted with tuberculosis.”

*“Hart Island also contains “potters’ field,” the pauper burial ground, where more than a quarter of a million of the city’s poor are “sleeping their last sleep,” and where their numbers are being augmented each year by over 6,000 additions.”*

“At each (of our) institutions there are three chaplains – Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish, who by precept and example point the way to a higher life. They are real pastors, encouraging the disenheartened, comforting the sick, and when life is ebbing away, preparing the dying for the “great journey.” The prison chaplain is doing a noble and unostentatious work, meagerly and inadequately recompensed when measured in dollars and cents, but with keen satisfaction that he has reached down a helping hand to the lowly and inspired them with lofty ideals.”

- An article by Charles F. Odell titled “Pictures from the Hart’s Island Reformatory” appeared in the JUNE 1920 MISSION NEWS as follows:

MAC.—A Canadian officer who went overseas Oct. 1st, 1914; he was wounded several times and his wife, a base hospital nurse, was killed at Valdecourt, Belgium, and his brother died in his arms at Vimy Ridge in 1917.

My first talk with this man was in the shoe shop on Hart’s Island and later he wrote me a long letter telling of his deep interest in my talk in the Chapel and expressing a wish to join the confirmation class. He is a college graduate, has no friends or relatives in this country and no money. Upon his discharge he asks for someone to guide him and to help him get a position where he can earn an honest living and go straight. He is mastering the shoemaker’s craft, and plays trombone in the Institution band.

A.—was in my own division and regiment in France, so naturally we are good friends; he was wounded and shell-shocked overseas, and one day I found him in the Institution Hospital.

I was with him a week ago when he was paroled. On Thursday last upon calling at his house, was disappointed to learn that he had not gone to the position which is waiting for him. Had a good talk with his mother and left word for him to go to work the next morning and will call again on Monday to see that he has so done.

H.—A young boy who should never have been sent to the Island; his mother turned him over to the Court when she knew he had done wrong. He was one of my altar boys; a most faithful and devout attendant. To keep him from the older men, the Warden assigned him to the hospital. I was able to have a good talk with him as he was leaving.

The brother of Ex-Pres. Taft was at Yale with me and is Principal of a school in this

lad's home town. In response to my letter, Mr. Taft thanked me for letting him know of this case and has had his school chaplain look after him.

T.—A Columbia graduate, a professional man and a favorite with all. I enjoyed being in his company. He worked hard in the hospital and was proud that there had been no deaths during his sojourn there.

Being told by a keeper that he was low-spirited, I had myself locked in with him as thereby I could have more time for a long talk. After a few days he was as busy as ever helping others. One night, a week or two later, he came to me in a big dormitory and I found he was in bad shape. He complained of suffering from asthma and asked me to go to the Superintendent of a well known Rescue Mission in order to be released.

One Sunday when the keeper saw him at service he restored him to his former position in the hospital, but he had another bad spell and was sent back to the dormitory. A few nights later came for me and asked if the doctor had told me of his condition. All night long poor T. laid unconscious, but did not pass away until the next morning; his wife who had been sent for arriving too late.

In the next cot lay another man dying. It was a solemn and strange experience to pass the night with these two souls and thinking of what their lives might have been.

T. came from a good family, who gave him interment in Woodlawn Cemetery. At the Rescue Mission where I told them of T's death, all were deeply touched. One friend of his, a backslider, came forward and on his knees, asked God for forgiveness and strength to lead a Christian life.

T's brother was with me until 11:30 last night and was very thankful that I was able to tell of the particulars of his brother's death.

In the hospital was a kindly old gentleman of 86. He always came with a cheerful smile to shake hands with me. Some said that he had been a Confederate general. He was reluctant to speak of the past and I do not blame him. He had evidently seen better days. It is too bad his last days could not have been his best days.

The other night a Jew, a college graduate from California, asked if he could attend my service. My reply was that he would be most welcome and to bring his friends.

With the aid of a real French Countess and others, this man had robbed the country of \$150,000. He seemed to believe in not stealing often, but stealing much.

T.—is the head cutter; his work supplies the whole shop. He is a quiet, very industrious man, and he was the first to join the confirmation class and gave me the names of two others. The shop foreman says employers would be glad to pay such a skilled cutter \$50 a week.

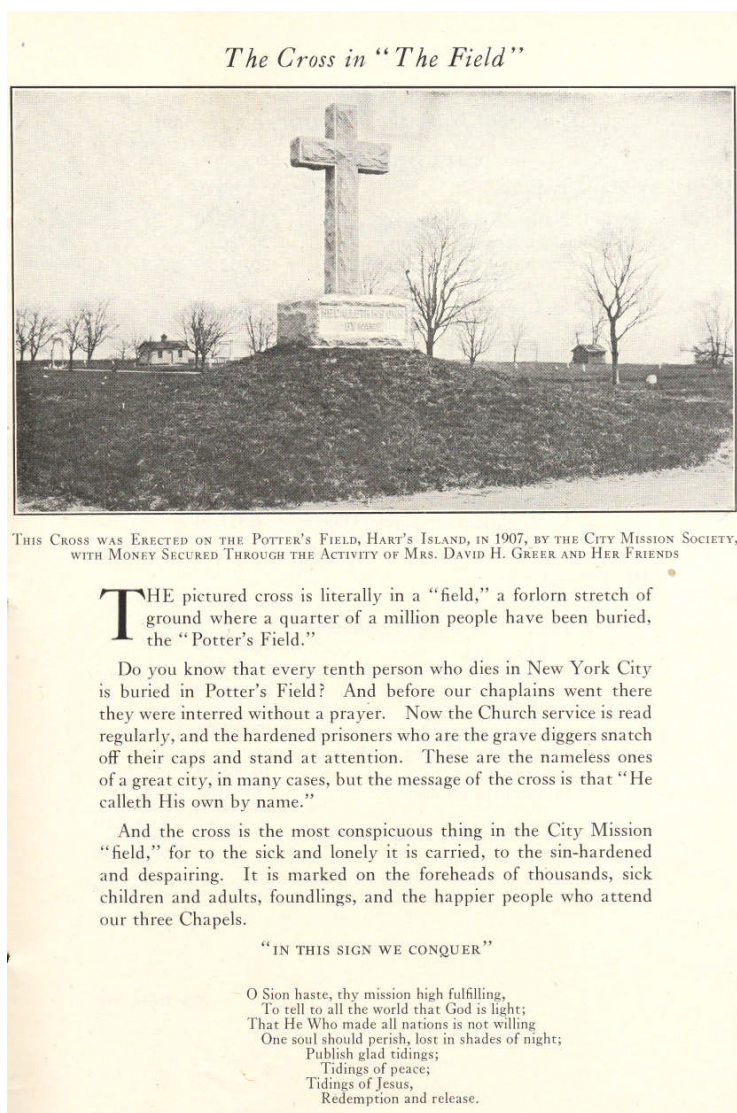
In response to T's expressed wish for a designing book, after some search I found such a book, the cost of which would be \$10. The publishers have generously donated this and they would have been gratified, indeed, could they have seen his face when I put it in his hands.

By experience it is found that the best time to visit the men is at night when they are in their dormitories. Many of them are resting or reading on their cots and there is a good chance to have personal heart-to-heart talks after the day's work is over.

The results of these talks cannot be put on paper. It is like the experience of Supt. Hadley of the McAuley Mission, when he was asked how many of his converts stuck. He replied he did not know and said the books were kept in heaven.

The 1920 Annual Report for the City Mission Society included the following full page about the Potters' Field.





- The cover of the MAY 1921 MISSION NEWS featured a story about Confirmations on Blackwell's and Hart's Island.

On an April Sunday Bishop Ferris of Western New York (*acting for the Bishop of New York*), confirmed a class of sixteen at the Hart's Island Penitentiary, presented by Chaplain Odell, and we want to quote from a letter written by the Bishop last month:

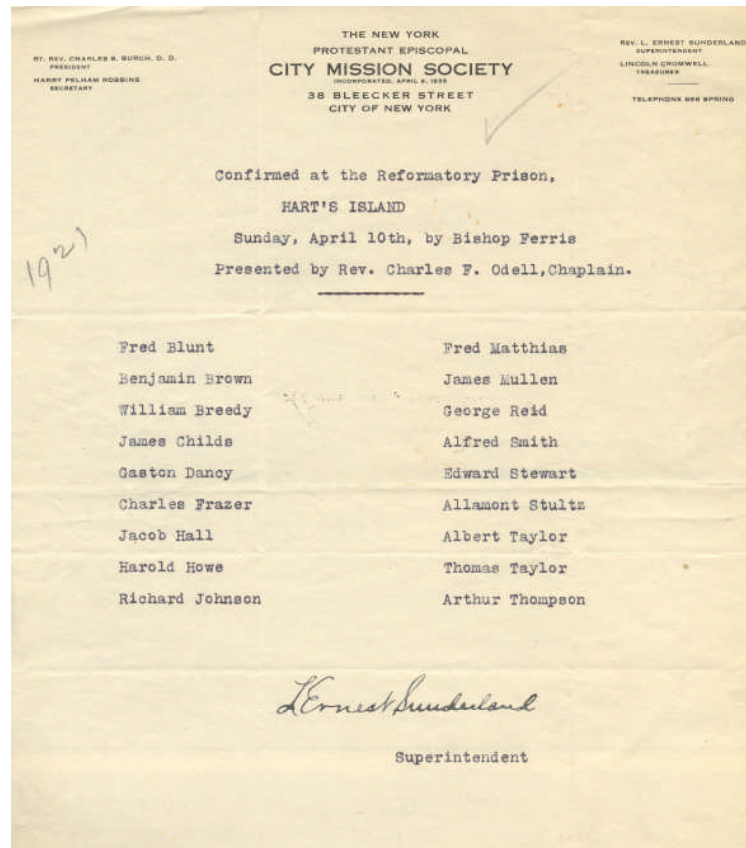
"One of my very kind friends was here at the house calling this afternoon, and I was speaking of the devotion of the Chaplain at Hart's Island, and telling her of my interesting experience there and the Confirmation. I also spoke of the fact that in the sermon I tried to tell those men something of the life and love of the Good Shepherd. My friend at once made the suggestion that she would like to present to the Chapel, to be hung over the altar, a copy of a painting of the Good Shepherd, with staff in hand and lamb in His arms. Will you please let me know if such a gift would be acceptable?"

The Bishop was told it would indeed be a welcome addition to the Chapel, with its message to the prisoners of tenderness and reclamation.

This is a hard field, and the Chaplain is doing a fine work for these men. Thanks to

our “Book Drive,” they have the “ten dictionaries” asked for, and much in the way of helpful and entertaining reading is going over to them from time to time.

The chaplain has recently given out Testaments in Greek, Italian, Spanish, German, Polish, and says “It is touching to see these foreigners grasp the book and eagerly devour the contents in the language they can understand.”



- The NOVEMBER 1921 MISSION NEWS contained the following article by the Rev. Chaplain Charles F. Odell titled “Snapshots from a Reformatory Prison”:

The demand for tobacco is unending, and many generous friends have helped us, so we want them to see it is appreciated. The first letter has 99 penciled signatures:

Old Man’s Home

Dear Chaplain:

We desire to express to you our gratitude for the many kindnesses shown us, and especially for the free tobacco you secured and distributed for our use.

A working Christianity such as yours demands attention and compels belief, even of the most skeptical. Your broadmindedness and cheerful intimate talks have cheered the heart of many a downhearted man, and there are many such among us.

Sincerely your friends and well-wishers

Reverend Sir:

I have been requested by the inmates on a number of occasions to thank you for your

kindness in having tobacco sent to them again, and to acknowledge its receipt. The old men, especially, are very much pleased with it, and would like to thank you in person if they had the opportunity. They realize how precious it is when one is penniless and appreciate it two-fold.

They also wish to thank you for your troubles in getting other favors for them, and assure you they are not wasted.

Respectfully yours, Keeper

On my trip through the dormitories tonight I will have a Greek Testament for a Greek, a German Testament and a religious book for a German, a Beginners' French for a colored man, a baseball magazine for our pitcher, a religious book in Italian for some Italians, a story magazine for a former trusty who was a cheerful helper, and others. Many of the men want to learn Spanish, hoping in some South American country to "make good." Sometimes I give those English and a Spanish Testament. In that way they learn more than the language.

I did not quite know what to do with some Christmas music and three "Musical Reviews." Gave them to a Hebrew who was studying music in New York and he was perfectly delighted, as he found the picture of his teacher in one of the Reviews. Since then he has been attending our Chapel service.

One of the men at the T. B. hospital was very sick. I spoke to him about baptism and its importance when I was on the boat with him on the way to the Metropolitan Hospital. He reached there at 5; at 8.30 one of our chaplains baptized him, and the next morning he died.

Our organist has had a badly checkered career. His young wife got into trouble and was sent away for a year, now in Metropolitan Hospital, where our chaplain has given considerable time to her. Both will be out in December, and we trust have learned their lesson, and will straighten out their young lives — they are only 20 and 23 — and will make a success through the aid of the Church, which found them in the places of their remorse and sorrow.

- In April 1922 another Confirmation took place on Hart's Island. The Mission News tells the story thusly:

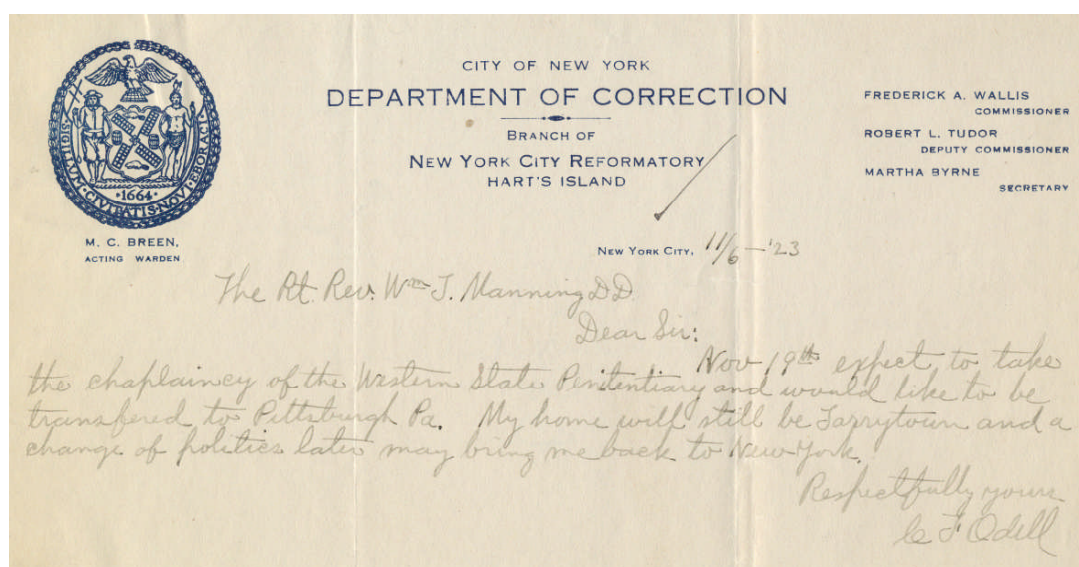
On Palm Sunday afternoon, April 9th, Chaplain Odell presented 17 prisoners for Confirmation at the Hart's Island Reformatory by Bishop Shipman (*Suffragan Bishop of New York*). The following gives the impression made on one of the inmates:

"It was an ideal day, and through the generous help of Warden Breen and the Roman priest supplying us with potted plants and cut palms, our 'Upper Room' was a truly beautiful setting for 'the big thing' in so many of the boys' lives. Bishop Shipman administered the rite and gave two short talks to the congregation. He had them with him from the very start; believe me when he comes the next time he will have a hard job to get into the room! His talks have been the main talk of the place here since. I have heard some wonderful singing by trained choirs and large congregations but the singing Sunday afternoon was truly inspired. And St. John's in its grandeur, or St. Thomas' in its rare beauty, offered no finer picture than did our Room, bathed in a wonderful sunlight as the Bishop pronounced Benediction. There was a spontaneity about the whole service that only can be had from 'the within'! It will be remembered by many for a long time; I'll

never be able to forget it.”

The light of the afternoon sun shone through the large chapel doors directly upon the flower-decorated altar, showing up the crimson velvet dossal and other rich altar furnishings, recent gifts of Miss Estelle C. Ogden. We wished very much that the kind donor could have seen the beauty of all she has done, lighted by the spring sunshine. The congregation of between one and two hundred men listened earnestly to the humanly helpful talk of the Bishop, and one felt that every word was perfectly understood and the uplift great. The men sang the hymns with great fervor, and one of the inmates rendered a solo, “The Palms,” most beautifully.

Chaplain Odell left the Diocese of New York in Nov. 1923 to do prison work in Pittsburgh and the Rev. E. H. Cleveland M. D. assumed the duty of Acting Chaplain for Hart Island. Cleveland would serve as Chaplain at three hospitals as well.



- The NOVEMBER 1924 MISSION NEWS featured this short story “From the Branch Penitentiary at Hart’s Island”

One friendless man’s problem found a happy solution in the following manner: A Englishman of fifty-eight was released from the penitentiary bearing a letter from Chaplain Cleveland.

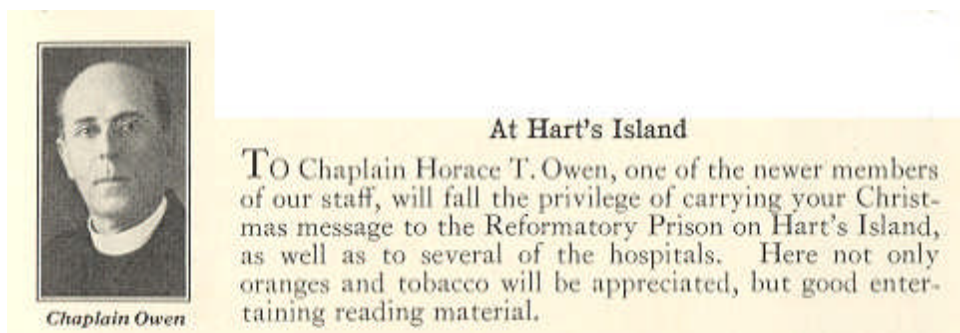
The Social Service secretary referred him to the City Aid Bureau and on the same day he obtained work as a kitchen helper in one of the city hospitals.

A letter came from him soon afterward, saying, “I am truly the most fortunate and grateful man in New York. God is surely with me. May He keep me from drink and bad companions.”

In late 1924 the Rev. Horace T. Owen became the resident Chaplain to the Reformatory Prison on Hart’s Island. He also acted as the Visitor to Lebanon, Union and Montefiore Hospitals. His station on the Island as summarized in the 1924 annual report of the Society was “Sunday Service and monthly Holy Communion; the Potter’s Field is here, and committal prayers said. Much reading matter is needed.”



- The NOVEMBER 1925 MISSION NEWS included a picture of Chaplain Owen, along with mention of his Christmas needs on the Island



The 1926 Annual Report of the Episcopal City Mission Society emphasized that the Potter's Field remained an integral part of their ministry. "At the graves of the unknown dead and for those who die without means for burial, a chaplain from this Society reads a burial service at the Potter's Field."

- Under the heading "The Chaplains at Work" this entry is found in the JANUARY 1928 MISSION NEWS.

Last spring a prominent Englishman sojourning in this country became entangled in a legal difficulty which ended in his commitment to the Branch Penitentiary at Hart's Island. Because of his intellectual and his professional training the books which he found in the Hart's Island library were of little comfort to him. He fell into the habit of stopping in to see Chaplain Horace T. Owen, who officiates there for this Society.

Chaplain Owen secured the type of books which this man needed and spent much time with him in friendly conversation. Spiritual council and good comradeship mingled in their conversation. The Englishman became interested in the services which Chaplain Owen holds at the penitentiary. His depression and sense of humiliation gradually became leavened with a new determination to view his troubles philosophically. Recently he was discharged from the penitentiary and has secured a position as head of one of New York's most influential business organizations. On leaving the penitentiary he wrote a letter to Chaplain Owen from which we quote the following:

"It is due to my deep sense of appreciation that I should like to tell you something about the wonderful work you are doing at this institution for the welfare of the inmates."

"It is seldom, if ever, that one comes across such sympathy and understanding as yours, and, indeed, one has to be an inmate to know and to realize the real value of such qualities displayed unstintingly in an hour of need. It is a privilege to have you as our spiritual guide; but it is, indeed, a pleasure to claim you as our friend and philosopher."

"I feel sure I am voicing the sentiments of many of my fellow inmates—good men, bad men, all kinds of men with whom it has been my lot to be thrown—when I say that without your willing help, your cheerful messages of hope, your genuine interest in our well-being and progress, and your spiritual ministration to our needs, life here would assuredly be a burden, and the future a grim stone wall."

"My own is only one case. I know of many fellows who have found peace of mind and comfort for their souls after attending your services and hearing your sermons. If

Christianity could only be understood and interpreted in this fashion by men outside, both clergy and laity alike, this world would be a better place in which to live.”

- The 1927 annual report of the Society indicated that there were Correctional Chaplaincies in twelve prisons and reformatories. Another letter is shared by Chaplain Owen as well:

From a letter written by a former prisoner at Hart’s Island, to Chaplain Horace T. Owen, one gains a glimpse of what the Chaplain’s work may mean, not only in the institution, but during the difficult weeks after discharge:

“I have been working now for more than three weeks. I started as day-porter and when I had worked four days I was promoted to night-elevator man.”

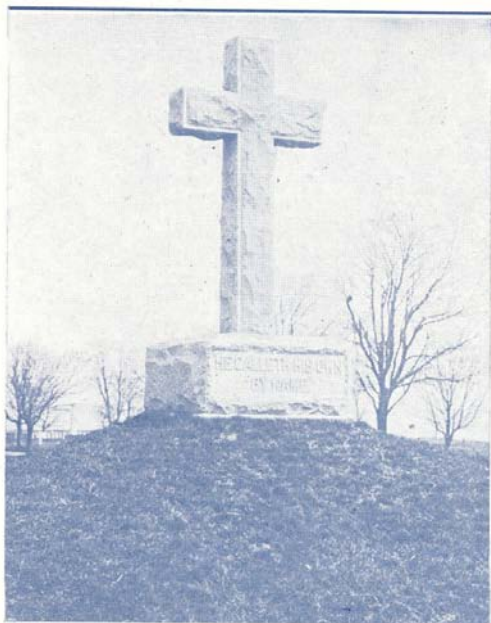
“While looking for work I called upon several of the people to whom you referred me. The kind lady at the mission gave me an overcoat, which I sorely needed in the cold weather. I had four dollars in cash, so I stopped at the Bleecker Street Mills Hotel. Through the man whose name you gave me I was able to find a room for two dollars and a half a week. He loaned me money for the first week’s rent and for an alarm clock. I was glad to be able to return his five dollars last Friday.”

“I brought with me from the penitentiary the dictionary, chemistry and double-entry bookkeeping text books. Also some articles from the Atlantic Monthly’s ‘Forum’ and ‘Open Court’ magazines which I made up in book form. It was your influence and the help of these books that enabled me to gain a victory over the difficulties of my environment.”

“Will you please allow me to return the two dollars which I owe you on my dentist bill? I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the kindness you have shown me and I know God has blessed you for your charitable missionary work.”

The following image of a page from the NOVEMBER 1928 MISSION NEWS is presented in its entirety.

## Too Late for These—



*Where the City's Nameless Dead Lie Buried  
—Cross Erected Through City Mission Society  
at the Potter's Field on Hart's Island*

### *Not Many People Know That—*

One out of every eleven persons who die in New York City, are buried in the Potter's Field.

The Episcopal Mission's chaplain, Rev. Horace T. Owen, official Protestant Minister at the Potter's Field, said the Committal Service for 6,074 nameless dead last year.

### **At the Potter's Field**

**I**N a recent issue of a New York daily, appeared an account of just one day's bit of tragedy as it is enacted throughout the year at the Potter's Field:

"Forty-four unknown soldiers of fame and fortune, unwept, unhonored and unsung, were laid to rest yesterday. Their requiem was the ghastly stream of jokes from the lips of convicts who buried them. Their catafalques were forty-four pine boxes, ugly and slender and cold. Their tomb was a gaping clay ditch on the waste end of Hart's Island. Their mourners were a few vagrant gulls flying above the trench. . . . With them were buried a thousand tales of heroism, cowardice, love, hate, fear and hope—tales to which nobody had ever listened.

"'He Calleth His Own by Name,' was the inscription beneath the only cross on the city's Potter's Field."

Nothing was said in this story of the fact that the City Mission Society's chaplain was waiting there to pronounce the Church's blessing for the dead. His presence there, and the lonely cross placed there by faithful women who wished to remember the unfortunate, were tokens that the Church does not forget.

But how much greater could have been its blessing, could it have been able to stretch out a friendly hand to these poor bewildered ones in the days when their earthly fate hung in the balance. With all that the agencies of Church and State are doing to help the distressed, there is still so much that has had to go undone.

An April 12, 1929 article in the New York Times reported that “prison welfare work was discussed yesterday by 22 chaplains of New York penal institutions who met for the first time for that purpose under the auspices of Commissioner Richard C. Patterson Jr. Taking part in the conference were Chaplains representing the Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths.” Issues concerning follow-up, teaching that crime doesn’t pay, and using hardened offenders to teach the young were all discussed.

“Among the Roman Catholic Chaplains present were the Rev. William E. Cashin, the Rev. John J. Hickey, the Rev. Joseph F. Conway, the Rev. George B. Murphy, the Rev. John J. Laherty, the Rev. Demetrious B. Zema, the Rev. George B. Ford, the Rev. William P. Russell and the Rev. F. J. Frey.”

“Protestant Chaplains were the Rev. Almon R. Papper, the Rev. Frederick M. Gordon, the Rev. William H. Hall, the Rev. William B. Eddy, the Rev. Horace T. Owens, the Rev. Thomas Magnan, the Rev. Alexander Ross and the Rev. Joseph McGuinness.”

“Jewish Chaplains present were Rabbis Harry Lewis, Jacob Tarlau and Joseph Sarachek.”

- In the 1930 Annual Report of the Episcopal City Mission Society Chaplain Owen shares with us another story from the Reformatory Prison on Hart’s Island:

Convicted and sentenced to Hart’s Island, a young man came to the attention of the Society’s chaplain there, and, as a result, began to think of things up to that time neglected.

Never having had the proper home environment or religious training of any sort, this visionary, likeable young chap, had drifted away from the few people who really had been interested in his well-being. It was then that his troubles had begun.

Now, in the Penitentiary, he had time to think. In his thinking, the chaplain was privileged to share. After a few visits, the boy began to come to services. Finally, the day came when he made his Communion. “It had cost him much to reach this point in his life,” the chaplain says, “but the experience had brought him much.”

After his release he wrote, “Words cannot express my deep gratitude to you and the people who support your work, for the ineffable kindness shown not only to myself but to all of us fallen from grace.” And again he wrote of someone whom he remembered at the Penitentiary, “I sometimes feel that I could reclaim him. I’d like to help somebody.”

On October 25, 1931 the cornerstone of the new Catholic Chapel at the Hart’s Island prison was laid. The New York Times billed it as the “Only separate prison building in the United States set aside for Catholic services.” More than 1800 persons attended and addresses were made by the Rev. Mgr. LaVelle, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of New York, Commissioner Patterson, the Rev. Demetrious Zema, Catholic chaplain; the Rev. Horace T. Owen, Protestant chaplain; and Rabbi Julius T. Price, Jewish chaplain.

The finished chapel was dedicated by Cardinal Hayes on May 1, 1932. Again from the New York Times we read that, “The new chapel, a gothic building of brick and stone, replaces an old frame structure which had stood on the island for the last 41 years and was rapidly becoming dilapidated by the high winds of Long Island Sound. According to Father Zema, the Hart’s Island prison is the only institution of its kind in the United States to which is attached a separate chapel for Catholic inmates. Most institutions furnish a common hall for all denominations.”



Now in its 100<sup>th</sup> year the 1931 annual report of the New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society included this full page on the Potter's Field under the heading "The Church Does Not Forget".

## "Potter's Field"

### *The Church Does Not Forget*

ON that isle of unclaimed dead—Hart's Island, a wind-swept strip of land set down in the East River where it converges with the Sound—are the graves of more than 300,000 friendless and unfortunate beings. Since 1869 it has been New York's official Potter's Field.

The more fortunate on opposite sides of the river view the grisly place with a shudder. "The Island of Forgotten Souls," unthinking ones call it. Unthinking, perhaps, because they have not paused to realize that those who have found this poor last resting place are not forgotten by Him who "calleth His own by name"—nor by the Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society.



Where the City's  
Nameless Dead  
Lie Buried—  
Cross Erected  
at the Potter's Field  
on Hart's Island,  
by the Late Mrs. Greer,  
Wife of Bishop Greer,  
and Her Friends

Winter and summer—in fair weather or in foul—the Rev. Horace T. Owen, the Society's representative at Potter's Field, says appropriate prayers and recites the Committal on burial days. Each year he provides Christian burial for more than 7,000 nameless dead. For although another faith is represented by a chaplain, only those who can positively be identified as members of that faith receive his ministrations. Chaplain Owen is one of a succession of ministers provided by the Society for the service since 1907.

This ministration is an integral part of the work of the Society. Its blessings are manifold. No longer is a single body interred in Potter's Field without a religious burial. Scarcely a day passes that there is not tangible proof of the thankfulness of relatives and friends of the many who in after years are identified, disinterred and laid to final rest in more fitting places.

The only memorial in this bleak spot is a beautiful granite cross erected through the efforts of Mrs. David H. Greer and the City Mission Society. On its base is inscribed:

"He Calleth His Own by Name."

The Rev. Horace T. Owen would continue on as Chaplain to the Penitentiary on Hart's Island throughout the 1930's. He would retire in 1943. His weekly statistical reports indicate that services were still held for the mass burials in the Potter's Field during this period. Unfortunately, probably due to the depression, the monthly issues of The Mission News were reduced to five pages and no chaplains reports can be found in them. Many problems would arise in the City prisons during this period.

From a series of articles in the New York Times we can reconstruct some of the issues that surfaced on Hart Island.

June 12, 1933: *Hart Island Criticized* - Nearly 15% of the prisoners on Hart's Island are less than 21 years of age. There is much overcrowding. The building which houses the prisoners is a fire trap.

June 19, 1934: *Prison Inmates in Fight* – two inmates are in the hospital and three in solitary confinement after a fight broke out on the baseball diamond when 1,000 prisoners were exercising.

August 18, 1934: *Jail Unrest Stirs Hart's Island Din* – Less than 24 hours after a bedlam of protests by 1500 prisoners at Welfare Island had been quelled, a similar disturbance broke out in the reformatory prison on Hart's Island, where 1,000 prisoners, 600 of whom are narcotics addicts, are confined. The prisoners began shouting and demanding reductions of their sentences under the Quinn Law, which provides that prisoners with fixed terms are entitled to ten days off a month for good behavior. Several windows were broken. The Commissioner assured prisoners that their rights would be recognized and protected.

December 11, 1936: *More Dormitories Planned* – Plans have been prepared for providing additional housing facilities for prisoners at the reformatory on Hart's Island.

January 6, 1938: *Visitors' Building Opened* – Keys to the newly constructed visitors' building at the penitentiary on Hart's Island were turned over to the commissioner by the local Works Progress Administrator.

December 22, 1938: *Mayor Urging WPA Not to End Jail Aid* – Continuation of a WPA rehabilitation project for prisoners in the city's penitentiaries and jails is being sought by Mayor LaGuardia. The rehabilitation program would be damaged to the point of extinction by termination of the WPA project. WPA workers were assigned to duty at Rikers and Harts Island.

April 1, 1939: *Grand Jury Scores Prisons of City* – A presentment containing sharp criticism of alleged cramped quarters, unsanitary buildings and inadequate facilities in the city's prisons on Rikers and Harts Island was handed up by a Bronx Grand Jury. The physical condition of the buildings on Harts Island is "a disgrace to the City of New York" the grand jurors charged.

December 28, 1940: *Gets Reformatory Post* – Edward Johnson, acting deputy warden at Rikers Island will succeed Acting Warden Lazarus Levy at Harts Island Reformatory.

January 27, 1942: *Harts Island Ends Bread and Water Diet As Punishment for Unruly Prisoners* – Apart from the headline issue here another part of the report made known that the unsightly pile of old junk iron and steel at the branch workhouse and penitentiary of Harts Island, the old reformatory prison, may be sent to smelters and serve a useful purpose in armaments. About 300 tons of this metal was piled near the dry cleaning building. The report also indicated that segregated prisoners are to have ample bed clothes in the future.

June 25, 1942: *Hart Island Prisoner Escapes* – Leo Fitch, with a record of 23 arrests and 8 convictions, slipped away from a dock gang and either swam or took a small boat to City Island. His parole had recently been refused.

13.

## Hart's Island Reformatory

Week ending	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June
	8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18
No. inmates	1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100 1100					
Serv. Sun. 10 AM	95 89 81 94 104 91 92 91 84 93 69 94 88 95 91 87 78 82 73 61 56 59 51 53 67					
Holy Com. Recd	42 34	31	27 28	34 61	33 23	27
Burials	149 140 218 199 196 132 162 200 148 130 282 160 166 187 179 216 176 153 195 189 183 181 82 179 212					
Visits	300 300					
Greetings	350 350 300 300 350 350 350 350 350 350 300 350 350 350 350 350 350 350 350 350 300 350 300 350 350					
Papers & Mags.	400 400 350 350 350 350 300 350 350 400 350 350					
Bibles	10 11 12 11 9 10 8 10 12 11 9 10 9					
Books	20 20 15 10 15 12 15 15 20 15 10 10 17 10 10 12 5 10 10 15 12 10 15 10 15 10					
Solders	9 10 10 9 9 9 9 9 8 9 10 8 7 9 10 10 6 9					

The Statistical Report of the Rev. Horace T. Owen for the first six months of 1939.  
Note the number of burials conducted weekly.

1943.

### HARTS - ISLAND - REFORMATORY - BRONX.

	JAN.	FEB.	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.
NO. DAYS ON DUTY	13	13	9						
NO. PART-DAYS	9	9	7						
NO. NIGHT-CALLS 8 P.M. - 8 A.M.									
NO. OFF-DUTY CALLS									
AVER. CENSUS	540	550	535						
NO. EPISCOPAL									
NO. PROT.	135	130	126						
BAPTISMS									
ADULTS									
CHILDREN									
CONFIRMATIONS									
FUNERALS	687	587	613						
PRIVATE									
COMMUNIONS									
TOTAL NO.									
COMMUNION-SER.	2	1	1						
NO. COMMUNIONS	43	20	27						
ATTENDANCE	59	32	37						
NO. OTHER									
SER. SUNDAYS	4	3	1						
AVER. ATT.	36	39	41						
TOTAL ATT.	123	117	41						
NO. OTHER									
SER. WEEKDAYS									
AVER. ATT.									
TOTAL ATT.									
AGG. NO. OF SER.	6	4	2						
AGG. ATTENDANCE	182	149	78						
CRITICALLY ILL									
PRE-OPERATIVE									

The Final Report from the Hart Island Reformatory.

From an article in the June 12, 1944 New York Times we read that the Island was “taken over by the Navy 14 months ago” to be used as “the scene of an intensive and successful rehabilitation program for recalcitrant sailors.”

“Lifting the veil of secrecy that has surrounded the activities on the Island, newspaper men were taken on a tour of the prison buildings. The old prison buildings have been remodeled, removing cell blocks and bars. Prisoners work six hours a day, some operating a 50 acre farm that produces corn, potatoes, tomatoes, and other vegetables in sufficient quantities to supply the summer needs of the 1600 prisoners.”

“Although the prisoners march to and from their work without guards there are relatively few attempts to escape. This is due to the difficulties of swimming the treacherous waters to the shore, and to an efficient boat patrol. But by far the most compelling argument against escape is a dozen or more highly trained German Shepherd dogs, who patrol the beaches at night with armed guards.”

“Flat and marked by comparatively few trees, Harts Island is a mile long by half a mile wide. Sixty buildings of various heights and sizes sprawl, seemingly without plan, over the Island. A large baseball field has been constructed near the administration building, with tennis and volley ball courts for the officers.”

“Flowers in profusion line the roads and walks, raised in prisoner operated greenhouses, where 20,000 plants were grown this spring.”

“A Catholic Church and a Protestant Church are centrally located among the island’s buildings, which include prison barracks, mess hall, central heating plant, firehouse with one engine, butcher, commissary, laundry, garbage disposal plant, hospital, officers quarters, dog kennels, visitors’ house, theatre, and ship’s company quarters.”

“The task of the medical staff is to rid the prisoners of the many unfounded fears and inhibitions that underlie many of their offenses against discipline. One of the problems encountered is fear, fear of leaving family and friends. Navy chaplains Allan B. Rice (a Methodist minister) and J. Buzak (a Catholic priest) play a large part in the rehabilitation program. Men are confined on Harts Island for a maximum term of one year.”

On March 31, 1946 we learned that the Navy planned to decommission the detention barracks on the island and convert it into a full fledged Navy Prison. However there must have been a change of plans for on November 1, 1946 the Navy returned Harts Island to the city Department of Corrections.

An article in the November 24, 1947 New York Times describes the situation thusly:

“A sweeping reorganization of the Dept. of Correction to place it on a “peace officer” basis with a clear-cut chain of command and definite fixing of responsibility at various levels was disclosed yesterday. Commissioner Albert Williams was named to his post soon after the Brooklyn City Prison break late in 1946. His report told of a complete revision of the depts. executive set up as well as the initiation of a repair program for the city penal institutions and their grounds, including Potters Field on Harts Island.”

“Mr. Williams declared the Navy Dept., which used Harts Island, left the grounds and buildings in a disgraceful condition with not a building fit for human habitation. *The Potters Field cemetery was in pitiful condition with more than 200 tons of junk and debris piled upon the graves.*”

“The commissioner announced that substantial progress had been made in repairing and rehabilitating buildings, grounds and roads.”



The 1948 annual report for the New York City Mission Society provides the following list of its staff chaplains. One cannot help but notice the name Horace T. Owen. Evidently after retiring in 1943 from Harts Island, Owen had moved his attention to The Tombs prison where he continued to work until 1950. This completed 25 years of service in the city's prisons for this humble servant. Notice that no-one appears to have been assigned specifically to Harts Island in this 1948 list. However the sacramental registers continue to record name specific burials on Harts Island by many of these chaplains, the deceased having been residents under their charge.

STAFF OF THE SOCIETY	
THE REV. WILLIAM E. SPRENGER, <i>Director</i> FREDERICK N. WILLIAMS, <i>Business Manager</i> THE REV. HAROLD RUSHTON BELL, <i>Chaplaincy</i> MRS. HENRY A. BELLOWS, <i>Publicity and Appeal</i> MISS FRANCES B. HAINS, <i>St. Barnabas House</i> MRS. MURIEL LENTON, <i>Family Service</i> MISS ALICE G. PALMER, <i>Social Work at Ellis Island</i> MRS. ELIZABETH E. J. KJAER, <i>Parole Work at Westfield State Farm</i> MISS ELIZABETH C. KLEIN, <i>Registrar for Camps</i>	
CHAPLAINS	
REV. HAROLD RUSHTON BELL	<i>St. Barnabas House</i>
REV. FRANCIS W. BLISS	<i>Manhattan State Hospital, Ward's Island</i>
REV. EDWARD C. BRADLEY	<i>Bellevue Hospital</i>
REV. ALAN R. BRAGG	<i>Sea View Hospital, Staten Island</i>
REV. ALBERT E. CAMPION	<i>Fordham Hospital</i>
	<i>House of the Holy Comforter</i>
	<i>House of Detention for Women</i>
REV. E. WARREN CROMEY	<i>City Home for Dependents and Cancer Institute, Welfare Island</i>
REV. EVERSLEY S. FERRIS	<i>Bellevue Hospital</i>
REV. RANDOLPH GALL	<i>Farm Colony, Staten Island</i>
REV. GEORGE H. HANN	<i>Wallkill State Prison for Men</i>
REV. ARMEN D. JORJORIAN	<i>City Penitentiary, Riker's Island</i>
REV. GEORGE B. H. MACNAMARA	<i>Metropolitan Hospital, Welfare Island</i>
REV. THOMAS W. B. MAGNAN	<i>New York City Reformatory and State Schools' Annex, New Hampton, N. Y.</i>
	<i>Orange County Jail, Goshen, N. Y.</i>
	<i>Camp LaGuardia, Greycourt, N. Y.</i>
	<i>Orange County Farm, Florida, N. Y.</i>
REV. THOMAS H. MORRIS, JR.	<i>Bellevue Hospital</i>
REV. HOWARD J. T. MUELLER	<i>Goldwater Memorial Hospital, Welfare Island</i>
REV. BENJAMIN R. PRIEST	<i>Bellevue Hospital</i>
REV. RICHARD S. PURDY	<i>City Hospital, Welfare Island</i>
REV. JOHN J. RANDOLPH	<i>State Prison for Women and Westfield State Farm, Bedford Hills, N. Y.</i>
	<i>Institutions in Dutchess County</i>
REV. C. ALBAN TOWNSEND	<i>Institutions in Westchester County</i>
ASSOCIATE CHAPLAINS	
REV. JOHN B. BOYCE	<i>City Penitentiary, Riker's Island</i>
REV. ERNEST W. CHURCHILL	<i>Rockland State Hospital</i>
REV. PERCY R. DEACON	<i>Harlem Hospital</i>
REV. ALBERT J. HAMBRET	<i>City Prison, Bronx</i>
REV. HORACE T. OWEN	<i>City Prison, Manhattan</i>
	<i>Peabody Home</i>

Beginning in 1950 the sacramental registers include listings for "mass burials" on Harts Island recorded by the Chaplains at Bellevue Hospital. Bellevue is where the City morgue was located and it was also one of the centers for the Pastoral Training of seminarians conducted by the Episcopal Diocese of New York. These chaplain interns learned the basic functions and operations of corrective institutions and hospitals. This enabled them to complement the services of other professionals there so that their own ministrations became a skilled help at the turning-points where they minister.

Next you will find scans of a few entries from the Society's sacramental registers throughout the 1950's.

	23	Elizabeth Miller	35 - -	City Cemetery, Hart's Is.	Alan R. Bragg
	23	Ernest Karfer	83 - -	" " " "	" " " "
	23	Wilbert Jones	48 - -	" " " "	" " " "
	23	Mass burial (Bellevue)	18 adults, 23 babies 18 stillbirths	" " " "	H. C. Bolton
	26	" " "	20 adults, 108 babies 30 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "
	26	William Mc Phall	68 - -	Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery	John J. Randolph
	29	James Mc Brier	77 - -	Evergreen Cemetery	Richard S. Purdy
	31	Mass burial (Bellevue)	46 stillbirths, 13 babies 10 adults, 13 babies	City Cemetery, Hart's Is.	H. C. Bolton
June	2	" " "	29 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "
	6	" " "	10 adults, 23 babies 67 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "
	9	" " "	27 adults, 28 babies 37 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "
	13	" " "	8 adults, 14 babies 27 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "
	16	" " "	27 adults, 40 babies 74 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "
	20	" " "	19 adults, 8 babies 24 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "
	23	" " "	20 adults, 31 babies 117 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "
	27	" " "	14 adults, 15 babies 31 stillbirths	" " " "	" " " "

## Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society May / June 1950

	27	David Hammond	75 - -	Trach Pond Cemetery, I.D.	" " "
	23	Harry P. Dike	79 - -	Mount Hope Cemetery Greenburgh, NY	James B. Edwards, Jr.
	26	Joseph Cody	78 - -	City Cemetery, Hart's Is.	John B. Cotton
	26	Mabel Mc Hell	78 - -	" " " "	" " "
	1	Mass Burial Bellevue	12 adults 27 babies 25 stillbirths	" " " "	H. C. Bolton
	6	" " "	19 adults 24 babies 66 stillbirths	" " " "	" " "
	8	" " "	29 adults 27 babies 27 stillbirths	" " " "	" " "
	13	" " "	33 adults 27 babies 64 stillbirths	" " " "	" " "
	15	" " "	28 adults 4 babies 10 stillbirths	" " " "	" " "
	27	" " "	29 adults 29 babies 100 stillbirths	" " " "	" " "
Apr	9	Jong Chung	55 - -	City " " "	John B. Cotton
	9	Miss Emily Silken	- -	same at House of Holy Comfort	Albert E. Campion
	9	Alcie Newbone	78 - -	City Cemetery, Hart's Is.	John B. Cotton
	15	Miss Nellie Lorge	- -	same at House of Holy Comfort	Albert E. Campion
	16	Minnie Bonanowski	77 - -	City Cemetery, Hart's Is.	John B. Cotton
	16	Nellie Walton	35 - -	" " " "	" " "
	16	Anna Butler	75 - -	" " " "	" " "

## Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society March / April 1956

According to the corrections dept. web site, in 1955 the United States Army Air Defense Command declared as operational its Nike missile battery NY-15, the only missile site within the New York metro area to be located entirely on two offshore islands. The missiles launchers were in silos on Hart Island but the ground-based guidance and control system was based on nearby David's Island, part of New Rochelle. The army would hold its final deactivation ceremony in June 1961. In the meantime burials would continue in the Potter's Field.

In the September 22, 1958 New York Times Nan Robertson wrote an article "About New York" concerning the Potter's Field. It reads like so many more recent articles do; but this one would draw a response from the Rev. William E. Sprenger, director of the Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society.

At the head of Long Island Sound beyond the East River, there is a little-known Island. In late summer, field asters spread a blanket of blue across its treeless northeastern tip. In winter, it lies shrouded in fog or swept by icy winds.

Nearly 500,000 are buried there. In life, they were the loneliest of all the millions who crowd this city. No friends wept for them. Now they lie together in potter's field.

Last year, 3,822 of the cities forgotten were taken to potter's field. Some were old and tired; others had been cut down in their prime. A few were nameless. All were paupers.

No flags and no flowers draped the coffins in which they lay. No tombstones mark their graves. Their pallbearers were prisoners from the city workhouse at the southern end of Hart Island.

Twice a week, every week of the year, New York's unclaimed dead are taken to the City Mortuary on East Twenty-Ninth Street.

At 9 o'clock one recent morning, while Manhattan workers and housewives poured out into a dazzling sun, a dark green truck backed into an alleyway beside the mortuary. On its side was an insignificant gold seal: "Department of Hospitals, City of New York." One by one, plain pine coffins were carried onto the truck. There were thirty-six in all, an unusually small number.

The doors were closed and the truck rolled north: up the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive through flowing traffic; on past homes and parks and construction sites in the East Bronx, all busy with life.

At 9:52 A. M. the truck rumbled onto a dock at City Island. Fishermen lined along the sides turned their heads briefly. A fleet of little boats bobbed in a freshening sea. The waiting ferry swallowed the truck and throbbed away from shore.

A mile to the east, across a glittering strip of water, lay Hart Island. Red brick prison buildings clustered under a grove of trees at the southern end. To the north the slope rose smoothly to a single white shaft in potter's field.

Swaying, the truck ground up a gravel road to the monument. The wind ruffled a knee-thigh plateau of grass and blue flowers. There were no markers, only a huge, raw wound in the earth.

The grave for these homeless had been dug days before. Sixteen men in gray over-alls and caps stood near, leaning on their spades.

Mute and unsmiling, twelve prisoners shifted the heavy burdens from the truck to their shoulders, and then laid the long pine boxes gently on the grass.

The quiet was broken by the scratch of chisels as identifying numbers were cut deep into the soft pine. A red-faced guard, moving his lips, checked off each number against his sheet.

Then the men in gray wrote the names of the dead for the last time. They were inscribed on the coffins, in big, black strokes of indelible crayon.

Far overhead in the clean blue sky the gulls wheeled, crying. The scintillating, sun struck waters of the sound lapped the shore. Far to the southwest, Manhattan's midtown skyscrapers pierced the sparkling air.

When all was ready, four men lifted the first coffin and shuffled slowly to the mass grave. The gaping trench was 40 feet long and 15 feet wide. Next spring the scar will be healed by grass and flowers.



The wind rose and the gusts that shivered in from the sound carried the clang of a bell buoy, tolling its fitful warning.

Two men stood in the trench to receive the coffins, which they piled three high, packed close together, row on row.

There were no rites. When the last pine box had been slipped into place, the prisoners stroked a blanket of earth over all who lay so closely there.

In death they were not alone.

In a letter to the editor of the Times Fr. Sprenger would write the following:

“I believe I may speak for all of the Protestant churches of New York in bringing to your attention a misconception which may generally be gathered from Miss Robertson’s otherwise noteworthy article – namely, that no religious ceremonies are conducted for these dead.”

“Actually, before burial each Tuesday and Thursday morning at Hart’s Island a complete funeral service of the Order for the Burial of the Dead from the Book of Common Prayer is read at the 29<sup>th</sup> Street City Mortuary about midnight for those who are known to have been Protestant. This service is conducted by the Rev. Herbert Bolton, a chaplain of the New York Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society at Bellevue Hospital. A separate service is read for children. Committal services are conducted at this time, with sand placed upon the coffins destined for burial.”

Burial date	MAN				WOMAN		
	NAME	CHRISTIAN NAME	INSTITUTION	No. BURIALS	Place of Burial	CHRISTIAN NAME	INITIALS
1969							
April	25	Mass Burial	Bellevue Hosp	15 adults, 2 babies, 7 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	29	Mass Burial	Bellevue Hosp	16 adults, 31 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	30	Mass Burial	Bellevue Hosp	17 adults, 1 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	30	Mass Burial	Ned. Ep. Mission	8 adults	City Cemetery	M. Bailey	
March	5	Mass Burial	Bellevue Hosp	4 adults, 57 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	5	Mass Burial	Bellevue, Ned. X.	6 adults	City Cemetery	Gary W. House	
	20	Mass Burial	Bellevue	3 adults, 26 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	21	Mass Burial	Ned. Ep. Mission	10 adults	City Cemetery	R. B. Myers	
	21	Mass Burial	Bellevue	5 adults, 20 babies, 50 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	25	Mass Burial	Bellevue	31 adults, 3 babies, 19 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	27	Mass Burial	Bellevue	19 adults	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
June	23	Alexander Matzuka	Rockland	72	Hospital Cemetery #2	A. A. Adenbe	
May	5	Mass Burial	Bellevue	12 adults	City Cemetery	Jan. R. Botter	
	6	Mass Burial	Bellevue	9 adults, 13 babies, 14 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	8	Mass Burial	Bellevue	3 adults, 7 babies, 14 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	13	Mass Burial	Bellevue	4 adults, 31 babies, 39 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
	13	Mass Burial	Bellevue	3 adults	City Cemetery	Jan. R. Botter	
	16	Mass Burial	Bellevue	3 adults	City Cemetery	Russell B. My	
	16	Mass Burial	Bellevue	4 adults, 7 babies, 18 stillborn	City Cemetery	H. C. Bolton	
				3 adults, 21 babies			

#### Protestant Episcopal City Mission Society April / May 1969

The Rev. William E. Sprenger retired in 1962. The Rev. Herbert C. Bolton would retire in 1972. This practice of prayer at the City Morgue continued at least up to that time. There are no sacramental registers in the diocesan archives that mention “mass burials” and that go beyond the year 1969 however.



No documentation can be found in the archives of the Episcopal Diocese of New York to indicate that the practice of reading the burial service before each mass burial in the Potter's Field was continued beyond this point. Certainly a very active chaplaincy program had been established at Bellevue Hospital and continued for the next several decades, so it is likely to have been the case.

Meanwhile on Hart Island several changes took place. In 1967 it became a major treatment center for narcotics addicts. The plan was to have the State pay for the program, while the City would manage the institution. The addicts were to be treated as patients, rather than as criminals, with the island being regarded as a medical, not a penal, institution. The program was run by Phoenix House.

An article in the July 24, 1968 New York Times was headed "Near Potter's Field, Addicts Seek Path to Life." An excerpt from that article follows.

Laughter and song exploded from the young men gathered on a smooth lawn under old trees. They were reformed narcotics addicts on Hart Island fighting to rejoin society...About a half a mile away, the silence was broken only by the dirge of a bell buoy, mist hung over unruly weeds that bordered graves without names and machine-made ditches waiting for the coffins of paupers. This was potter's field.

These extremes of hope and despair are in constant coexistence these days on the 100 acre island. "I don't think about the potter's field", said one of the men. "I remember when I was a prisoner on Rikers Island; I used to come here sometimes with the burial detail. And I'm not the only one here who has buried the dead in potter's field."

Prisoners from Rikers who do this work are volunteers and get 10 cents an hour. There are no flowers and no music, and the only service is said at the Bellevue Morgue, not at the grave. The pine coffins are three deep and in two lines."

Another such article, dated August 14, 1974, and titled "The Last Ride to Harts Island" includes a reference to the fact that "*Before being put into the pine coffins, the bodies are photographed, fingerprints taken, and Bellevue's Protestant and Catholic chaplains hold a common service.*"

In 1976 the Phoenix House program was discontinued, a victim of budget battles in Albany. The property was returned to the corrections department. It was during this period that the city began to explore possible future uses for the island.

A March 19, 1978 New York Times article indicated that back in 1972 a study commissioned by the city concluded that one of the available options included developing the island into a residential-resort complex, making it a sort of Monte Carlo or Riviera for Long Island Sound. Mr. Ralph Zinn, then the principal planner for the Bronx office of the Dept. of City Planning indicated that "its got a magnificent beach on the eastern shore...it could make a luxurious residential area, or if the city ever gets into legalized gambling, it would make a very good place for casinos."

Then in 1982 Mayor Koch announced that the city planned to set up a work camp for people convicted of "quality of life crimes." These would be three-card monte dealers, small-time drug dealers, graffiti vandals and turnstile jumpers. The project was opposed by the New York Civil Liberties Union which felt that it was wrong to send these kinds

of people to prison. To further complicate matters for the mayor the Criminal Court judges by and large refused to sentence minor criminals to the work camps. The program would eventually end, and in 1991 the use of Hart Island for inmate housing was formally ended by the Corrections Department.

Around this time the Coalition for the Homeless, a loose organization of voluntary agencies, had become the one of the major advocates for the poor in the City. They had pressed the original lawsuit that required the city to provide shelter to any homeless person who asked for it. The Rt. Rev. Paul Moore Jr., 14<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, was active in his support of their efforts, as were many of our Episcopal clergy and congregations.

In 1986 they would turn their attention to how the indigent were buried by the city. A May 26, 1986 New York Times article headed “Group Faults City Policy on Burial of Poor Infants” tells the story this way:

Almost half the infants who died in New York City from 1981 to 1984 are buried in Potter’s Field according to a study released yesterday by the Coalition for the Homeless. Forty seven percent of the children under one year of age – 3,070 of 6,527 – were interred in large trenches each filled with at least a dozen coffins in the field on Hart Island.

The Coalition attributed the number of infants buried in Potter’s Field to the city’s policy of paying no more than \$250 in funeral costs for the indigent. “The trenches where these children are buried is a macabre metaphor,” said Robert M. Hayes, counsel to the Coalition. “This is another reflection of the abandonment of the poor by the government.”

The study called on the city and state to raise the allotment for funeral expenses to \$900 and asked that all major religious denominations expand their assistance to the poor to help them care for their dead. It also asked that Potter’s Field be made accessible to mourners.

Mr. Hayes said that the larger issue raised by the study was the plight of the increasing number of children born into poverty in New York, and the lack of services for them and their families.

Health Department statistics indicate that the percentage of infants who have died in the city and been buried at Potter’s Field has remained relatively stable since the mid 1970’s.

James Whitford, a spokesman for the Department of Corrections said that the island is maintained by prison inmates and is guarded like any corrections facility. Generally, visits from the public are not permitted. “The graves are not marked, there is nothing to see,” Mr. Whitford said. “This is not a place anybody would want to visit.”

The tale has now gone full circle. Enter ‘Picture the Homeless’ in 1999 and their formation of a Group of religious leaders called ‘Interfaith Friends of Potter’s Field’:

*“All who pass from this life possess a sacred dignity intrinsic to their membership among the human family; and all consequently deserve to be reposed in dignity and remembered with honor.”*

The following article appeared in the December 2005 New York Post:

#### 9-YR. COMA VICTIM FACES NAMELESS GRAVE

"A crime victim who died after nine years in a coma will be buried in a potter's field unless someone can identify him."

"City cops are seeking the public's help in a bid to put a name to a man who was savagely beaten in the Bronx in July 1996. Known only as Henry, he was found unconscious in Macombs Dam Park near Yankee Stadium. Police rule his death a homicide but have little to go on. They aren't even sure if Henry is his real first name."

"The Medical examiners office was planning to bury him on Hart Island this week but has put that off until after New Year's in the hope someone will come forward with information about him. He was black, 26 years old, 5 foot 7 and 165 pounds."

"A spokesman for the Medical Examiners office said that if there is some new information that might help identify him, then we will hold him. We have no time limit."

"The mystery man languished for nearly a decade in Coler Memorial Hospital, a long term special care facility on Roosevelt Island (once known as Blackwell's Island). He was transferred to Bellevue Hospital in October and died seven days later."

Wayne Kempton is the Archivist of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. Comments or research inquiries concerning this piece may be addressed to him at 1047 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, New York 10025. He may also be reached at 212-316-7419 or by email at [archives@dioceseny.org](mailto:archives@dioceseny.org)