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Article abstract

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ARTICLE

A Re-education on How to Work: Vocational Programs in Kingston-Area Prisons, 1950–1965

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Keywords: prisons, gender and incarceration, prison labour, carceral state

Résumé : La Prison des femmes, le Pénitencier de Kingston et le Pénitencier de Collins Bay offraient chacun une variété croissante de possibilités de formation professionnelle aux personnes incarcérées au milieu du 20^e siècle. Cet article examine la formation professionnelle dans ces prisons dans la région de Kingston de 1950 au milieu des années 1960 et soutient que l'accès à ces programmes était largement basé sur le sexe et l'âge. L'idée de gouvernementalité de Foucault soutient l'analyse de la façon dont le Service des Pénitenciers du Canada, les réformateurs et les prisonniers ont compris le processus d'apprentissage du travail. Les femmes incarcérées à la Prison des femmes ont été formées dans des domaines qui reflétaient le travail domestique, et un nombre limité de jeunes femmes ont eu accès à une formation professionnelle à l'essai dans des domaines à prédominance féminine comme la coiffure. Les jeunes hommes dans l'adolescence et la vingtaine incarcérés au Pénitencier de Collins Bay ont eu accès à des métiers spécialisés, tandis que les hommes plus âgés du Pénitencier de Kingston pouvaient essayer de se qualifier pour être transférés au Pénitencier de Collins Bay en suivant des cours de formation de base. Ces programmes professionnels ont été soutenus par la Société John Howard de l'Ontario et la Société Elizabeth Fry de Kingston, des sociétés locales d'aide aux prisonniers qui ont aidé les anciens incarcérés à trouver un emploi et ont coordonné avec l'administration pénitentiaire pour renforcer les programmes de réadaptation.

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Mots clefs : prisons, genre et incarcération, travail des prisonnières et prisonniers, État carcéral

IN THE 1950S AND 1960S the Canadian prison system underwent a series of reforms intended to place “a new emphasis on the reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners.”¹ The Penitentiary Service of Canada believed its improved philosophy could transform prisoners into productive citizens who could become “assets rather than liabilities” to society.² At the core of this philosophy of reform and rehabilitation was the importance of labour and knowing how to work.

This article explores the programs designed to re-educate incarcerated people in Kingston-area prisons, specifically in Kingston Penitentiary, Collins Bay Penitentiary, and the Prison for Women (P4W), in this period of prison reform between 1950 and 1965. The Penitentiary Service’s plans to re-educate incarcerated individuals was supported by prisoner aid societies, which bolstered reform efforts enthusiastically. I argue that the Penitentiary Service offered different types of re-education to different groups of prisoners based largely on gender and age. Specifically, incarcerated men and women had access to skills in fields deemed appropriate for their gender, and younger prisoners were given priority over older prisoners regarding training. The women incarcerated at P4W, the young men incarcerated at Collins Bay Penitentiary, and the older men incarcerated at Kingston Penitentiary had varying degrees of access to vocational education during their sentences in the 1950s and 1960s, with educational outcomes targeted toward employment in class- and gender-appropriate jobs upon release.

I approach this topic as a social historian interested in prisons and the interactions of people on the inside, people on the outside, and people who occupy a space in between, often as both supporters and critics of prisons. Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality allows an exploration of all of these actors, their objectives, and the tools and technologies used to govern themselves and others toward the goal of learning how to work.³ Foucault’s work allows for an exploration of how power circulates throughout prisons and where prisoners find themselves among overlapping and simultaneous expressions of this power. Vocational training opportunities were not solely imposed from the top down by the Penitentiary Service; instead, they were positions coveted by prisoners. Waiting lists, applications for transfer, and attempts to

1. Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1951* (Ottawa: Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1952), 7.

2. Dominion of Canada, 8.

3. Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 102; David Garland, “‘Governmentality’ and the Problem of Crime: Foucault, Criminology, Sociology,” *Theoretical Criminology* 1, 2 (1997): 179; Nikolas Rose, Pat O’Malley and Mariana Valverde, “Governmentality,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 2 (2006): 85, 91.

learn vocational skills through more recreational pursuits all demonstrate that incarcerated people were interested in these opportunities, which is why governmentality is useful in teasing apart these different processes and strategies of changing incarcerated people's habits toward work. As David Garland explains, governing is not necessarily "the suppression of individual subjectivity, but rather the cultivation of that subjectivity in specific forms, aligned to specific governmental aims."⁴

Through analysis of archival records from Library and Archives Canada, Archives Ontario, Queen's University Archives, the Gaucher/Munn Penal Press archive, and the Public Safety Archives of Canada, I have gathered insights from prisoners, prison administrators, and prisoner aid society volunteers. I am most interested in which types of vocational education developed and who was offered opportunities to access training, but the places from which this information is derived also provide insight into the governance techniques of this period. For example, in 1961 the first full annual report issued under the new Commissioner of Penitentiaries proudly outlined its knowledge-collection efforts. The Penitentiary Service compiled detailed information about the types and processes of information collected to demonstrate its "perfection and the intensification of the processes" for which it was responsible in managing prisoners.⁵ Penitentiary Service staff conducted more than 65,000 interviews with prisoners, using a variety of types of interviews, in 1961 and produced 11,829 different reports from these interactions.⁶ The expansion of information collected by, for, and about the Penitentiary Service was influenced by a desire for reform.

The period from 1950 to 1965 was marked by changes in legislation, executive personnel, and vocational programs. Two key reports – one from the 1938 Royal Commission to Investigate the Penitentiary System and the other from the 1956 Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Principles and Procedures Followed in the Remission Service of the Department of Justice of Canada, known as the Archambault and Fauteux Reports, respectively – guided the reforms of the Penitentiary Service.⁷ These two investigations were spurred in large part by unrest in Kingston Penitentiary, where riots occurred in 1932 and 1954 over poor prison conditions including overcrowding, time spent in cells, and lack of opportunity to access education, meaningful work, and

4. Garland, "Governmentality," 175.

5. Foucault, "Governmentality," 95.

6. Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1961* (Kingston: Kingston Penitentiary Printer, 1962), 7.

7. Joseph Archambault, R. W. Craig and J. C. McRuer, *Report of the Royal Commission to Investigate the Penal System of Canada* (Ottawa: Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1938); Gerald Fauteux, William B. Common, J. Alex Edmison and Joseph McCulley, *Report of a Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Principles and Procedures Followed in the Remission of Service of the Department of Justice of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956).

recreation while incarcerated.⁸ Amendments were made to the Penitentiary Act in 1947 and 1961 in accordance with the spirit of the recommendations of the two investigations.⁹ The operationalization of the amendments was directed by two Commissioners of Penitentiaries, who each oversaw changes in the Penitentiary Service organization, personnel, and daily operations of prisons. Kingston-area prisons showcase the effects of these amendments to the Penitentiary Act and the disparities in treatment of different incarcerated people throughout this era of reform. The Kingston area was a regional prison hub at this time, with the Kingston Penitentiary, Collins Bay Penitentiary, and Prison for Women all operating within approximately two kilometres of one another.

Throughout this period, the Penitentiary Service of Canada was opening more institutions across the country to alleviate overcrowding and to establish differing levels of security in each region. Overcrowding was a common problem in most federal institutions in the immediate postwar period as the prison population increased by about one-third between the late 1940s and the late 1950s.¹⁰ Some of the new prisons opened included the Federal Training Centre in Laval, Québec, in 1952; William Head Institution, a former quarantine centre on Vancouver Island, in 1959; Beaver Creek Institution in Gravenhurst, Ontario, in 1961; and Mountain Institution in Agassiz, BC, to incarcerate both men and women who were members of the Sons of Freedom, a Doukhobor organization.¹¹ These

8. See Chris Clarkson and Melissa Munn, *Disruptive Prisoners: Resistance, Reform, and the New Deal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 16–24 (on the 1932 riot), 190–196 (on the 1954 riot that began after a fire destroyed large parts of the main cell block; prisoners disagreed and fought with prison administration over their assessment that the space was safe and habitable). C. Scott Eaton also discusses the 1932 riot but through his broader analysis of the Communist Party of Canada and the imprisonment of its members, most notably Tim Buck, in the early 1930s; see Eaton, “A Sharp Offence in All Directions: The Canadian Labour Defense League and the Fight against Section 98, 1931–1936,” *Labour/Le Travail* 82 (Fall 2018): 41–80. For muted official discussion of the events, see Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1955* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956), 8, 66, 72, 123–125. There was also protest and unrest at the Federal Training Centre, located in Laval, Québec, in 1954. Prisoners there destroyed property in protest of strict regulations; they also demanded more recreation and more access to vocational training.

9. “The Canadian Penitentiary Service,” n.d., 3, Matheson fonds, folder 246, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario (hereafter QUA).

10. There were 4,425 people incarcerated in federal prisons in 1949 and 6,295 people incarcerated federally in 1959. Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1949* (Ottawa: Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1950), 11; Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1959* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960), 13.

11. On the Federal Training Centre: Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1952* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), 11; on William Head Institution: Canada, *1959 Annual Report*, 7; on Beaver Creek Institution, which began as a correctional work camp: Canada, *1961 Annual Report*, 22; on Mountain Institution,

institutions across the country were joined by three others in the greater Kingston area: Joyceville Institution, a medium-security prison, opened in 1959; Pittsburgh Institution, a minimum-security prison, in 1962; and the Collins Bay Farm Annex, a minimum-security prison, also in 1962.¹²

Prison Labour in a Canadian Context

LABOUR HAS BEEN PRESENT in and key to the operation of prisons since their origins in earlier forms of incarceration in 16th- and 17th-century western Europe.¹³ Georg Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer, in *Punishment and Social Structures*, argue that punishment is intrinsically linked to the economic needs of a society and emerged from a historically specific mercantile capitalist economy where a need for labour justified punishments, like incarceration, that would keep the body of the labouring criminal classes intact.¹⁴ Foucault later argued in *Discipline and Punish* that a shift toward punishment of the soul instead of the body in the 18th century occurred to punish better, in a more standard manner.¹⁵ Foucault saw the ability to work and contribute labour “as the very machinery that transforms the violent, agitated, unreflective convicts into a part that plays a role with perfect regularity.”¹⁶ While these scholars differ in their approaches, criminologist Dario Melossi suggests that these two interpretations of the ideological origins of incarceration and prison labour need not be exclusive, as he explains that “the nexus of discipline to the teaching of obedience to the goal of subordinate inclusion (whether there be a

which also began as a correctional work camp: Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1963* (Kingston: Kingston Penitentiary Printers, 1964), 2. The expansion of federal institutions continued at an unprecedented pace following the period this article covers, with Matsqui Institution and its Women's Satellite Unit for incarcerated people with drug addiction opening in 1966, Cowanville Institution in 1966 as a medium security prison for youth, Warkworth Institution opening in 1967, Archambault Institution opening a minimum-security prison in 1968 and medium-security prison at the same site in 1969, Millhaven Institution in 1971, Bath Institution in 1972, and the Bowden Institution in 1974. Additional federal prisons have opened since 1975. On the opening of these institutions, see corresponding Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries.

12. J. G. Woods, *The Correctional Service of Canada, 1968–1979: A Historical Overview* (Ottawa: Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada, 1979), 2.

13. Georg Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer, *Punishment and Social Structure*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 41–44; Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the Penitentiary System*, 40th anniversary ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 32.

14. Rusche and Kirchheimer, *Punishment and Social Structure*, 66–69.

15. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 103, 125, 184.

16. Foucault, 242.

rhetoric of 'rehabilitation' at work or not) seems therefore to be the perennial (programmatic) *raison d'être* of the prison."¹⁷

Early prisons and similar institutions had European origins, but by the early 19th century, ideas of modern penitentiaries had travelled across the Atlantic and were reinterpreted by American colonists to align with emergent economic orders.¹⁸ The ensuing and competing models of the Auburn and Pennsylvanian penal regimes were spectacles of modernity, creating new institutions to frame the social values of the new country.¹⁹ Both models focused on reformation through labour, silence, and isolation. Pennsylvania left prisoners in complete isolation with labour in individual cells while Auburn had prisoners work alongside one another, without conversation, in congregate workshops.²⁰ Upper Canada, also looking to create new institutions, emulated the less expensive Auburn model to create its own modern penitentiary and hired the warden of Auburn Penitentiary to guide the process.²¹

Kingston Penitentiary opened in 1835, and the intimidating structure "would impose order on its inhabitants by facilitating separate confinement and surveillance" just as its proponents had intended.²² It became enshrined as Canada's first federal penitentiary in 1867.²³ Although it was supposed to become fiscally self-sufficient through prisoner labour, the penitentiary regime

17. Melossi and Pavarini, *Prison and the Factory*, 15.

18. Genevieve LeBaron, "Rethinking Prison Labor: Social Discipline and the State in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Labor and Society* 15, 3 (2012): 347. LeBaron argues that prison labour "has been used as a state strategy to coercively impose forms of labour discipline necessary to a historically specific form of capitalist order." She grounds her historical analysis in "the industrial prison contract system and the convict lease system" before exploring the role of prison labour in supporting American neoliberalism (p. 329).

19. David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2002), 85.

20. Ashley T. Rubin, *The Deviant Prison: Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary and the Origins of America's Modern Penal System, 1829–1913* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), xxiv–xxv, 38–42; Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum*, 86.

21. Peter Oliver, "Terror to Evil-Doers": *Prisons and Punishment in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 110–111.

22. C. J. Taylor, "The Kingston, Ontario Penitentiary and Moral Architecture," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 12, 24 (1979): 402–403.

23. Ted McCoy, *Hard Time: Reforming the Penitentiary in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2012), 82–84. In the immediate post-Confederation period, McCoy notes, reform stalled but those in positions of leadership were unconcerned, as they believed prisoners to be healthy and contented. Kingston Penitentiary was a part of a growing carceral archipelago in Upper Canada as other institutions functioned to criminalize and discipline the poor. For other 1830s examples of criminalizing the poor, see Bryan Palmer and Gaeton Heroux, "'Cracking the Stone': The Long History of Capitalist Crisis and Toronto's Dispossessed, 1830–1930," *Labour/Le Travail* 69 (Spring 2012): 20–22. The article traces further development of similar institutions and efforts by the wageless and the working class to organize and protest the crisis conditions created by capitalism.

soon shifted to government-contracted labour only, while local craftsmen pushed to have their trades protected from being undercut by cheap prison labour, as explored by historians including Bryan Palmer and Peter Oliver.²⁴ As the opening of Kingston Penitentiary was such an important moment, prison history in Canada has paid a good deal of attention to both the prison and the context of the 19th century from which it emerged.²⁵

This mirrors trends in broader histories of criminal justice in Canada, which have also had a temporal tendency toward the 19th century, with some studies stretching into the 20th century.²⁶ Studies of incarceration of women and girls, however, have ventured well into the 20th century led by Joan Sangster and criminologists such as Kelly Hannah-Moffat, who have analyzed the experiences of incarceration through class, colonialism, maternal feminism, and Foucauldian concepts.²⁷ Age of prisoners has been explored through distinctions between juvenile delinquency and adult offending, but the treatment of adults based on their age in prisons has not been explored in depth in a historical context.²⁸

24. Bryan Palmer, "Kingston Mechanics and the Rise of the Penitentiary, 1833–1836," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 13, 25 (1980): 10; Oliver, "Terror to Evil-Doers," 115, 118.

25. See Roger Neufeld, "Cabals, Quarrels, Strikes, and Impudence: Kingston Penitentiary, 1890–1914," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 31, 61 (1998): 96. Neufeld states that most Kingston Penitentiary history focuses on the Brown Commission and its results. Ted McCoy brings a Foucauldian to the early period of Kingston Penitentiary and the Brown Commission; see McCoy, *Hard Time*.

26. See Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991); Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law: Reflection of a Discriminatory Society," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 18, 36 (1985): 387–423; Ted McCoy, "The Unproductive Prisoner: Labor and Medicine in Canadian Penitentiaries, 1867–1900," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 6, 4 (2010): 95–112; Carolyn Strange, "'The Criminal and Fallen of Their Sex': The Establishment of Canada's First Women's Prison, 1874–1901," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 1 (1985): 79–92; Barrington Walker, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario Criminal Courts, 1858–1958* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Helen Boritch "The Criminal Class Revisited: Recidivism and Punishment in Ontario, 1871–1920," *Social Science History* 29, 1 (2005): 137–170; Donald Fyson, "Criminal Justice History in Canada: Some Thoughts on Future Developments," *Crime, Histoire & Société/Crime, History & Societies* 21, 2 (2017): 176. See Fyson for commentary on other trends in criminal justice history more broadly.

27. Joan Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized: Ontario Native Women Confront the Criminal Justice System, 1920–1960," *Canadian Historical Review* 80, 1 (1999): 32–60; Sangster, "Reforming Women's Reformatories: Elizabeth Fry, Penal Reform, and the State, 1950–1970," *Canadian Historical Review* 85, 2 (2004): 227–252. See also Sangster, *Girl Trouble: Female Delinquency in English Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Sangster with Tamara Myers, "Retorts, Runaways and Riots: Patterns of Resistance in Canadian Reform Schools for Girls, 1930–60," *Journal of Social History* 34, 3 (2001): 669–697; Kelly Hannah-Moffat, *Punishment in Disguise: Penal Governance and Federal Imprisonment of Women in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

28. For more on the contemporary challenges that aging prisoners in Canada face, see

More recent scholarship, such as Chris Clarkson and Melissa Munn's *Disruptive Prisoners*, brings postwar prison history, with a prisoner-led source base, into focus.²⁹ This article contributes to a growing postwar prison historiography. It does so by situating three different institutions, including both men and women in the same analytic framework, and explores the impact of prisoners' age through an analysis of the vocational training offered. Postwar prison histories offer the opportunity to study the mechanisms of governance and discipline at a time of upheaval and change, which renders these mechanisms more visible.

Early Postwar Reform at the Federal Level

MAJOR GENERAL R. B. GIBSON was Commissioner of Penitentiaries between 1946 and 1960. He sought throughout his tenure to implement the recommendations of the Archambault Report, which had been delayed during World War II.³⁰ Gibson found that some of the recommendations would require considerable co-operation between federal and provincial authorities. For example, the sole recommendation related to incarcerated women called for arrangements to "be made with provincial authorities for the confinement of women prisoners."³¹ This would allow women to be incarcerated in their home provinces and territories, ideally closer to familial support.³² Gibson wrote to each provincial Attorney General to relocate incarcerated women and was met with a resounding no from all.³³ This would be one of many reforms requiring co-operation between and across federal and provincial governments. Layers of bureaucracy involved in making substantial changes to the practices

Adelina Iftene, *Punished for Aging: Vulnerability, Rights, and Access to Justice in Canadian Penitentiaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019). This book leads explorations of how prisoners are experiencing aging while incarcerated and the variety of issues related to their health, their rights related to increased needs, and wider policy implications created by an aging prison population.

29. Clarkson and Munn, *Disruptive Prisoners*.

30. R. B. Gibson, "Report of R. B. Gibson: A Commissioner Appointed under Order in Council P.C. 1313, regarding the Penitentiary Service of Canada" ([Ottawa?] 1947), 1–17.

31. Archambault, Craig and McRuer, *Report*, 357–358.

32. Archambault, Craig and McRuer, 148.

33. Letters to Provincial Attorney Generals (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan), 25 January 1947, RG73, 1-21-30 Female Convicts, including Transfers Generally, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC). Response dates ranged, and most Attorney Generals cited a lack of either proper facilities or funds available to incarcerate federally sentenced women in their home provinces. The long-standing issue of regional isolation faced by incarcerated women was not addressed until 1995, when additional federal prisons for women opened following riots in 1994. Justice Louise Arbour, *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston* (Ottawa 1995), 21.

of the Penitentiary Service made the sweeping 88 recommendations of the Archambault Report challenging to implement.

Efforts to establish and strengthen relationships between the Penitentiary Service and other federal government departments were also crucial to the success of reforms. Gibson noted the importance of interdepartmental relationships especially in utilizing prison labour to rehabilitate prisoners.³⁴ He explained,

It has been well said that continuous and useful employment is a potent instrument of discipline and reformation, and the best means of training the prisoners in habits that will enable them to earn a living after they leave the prison. It is an accepted principle in Canada that the products of prison labour may be utilized within the prison system and by other Government departments, but may not be sold in competition with outside labour. It is therefore of great importance, if the necessary continuity and variety of employment is to be available, that the fullest cooperation should be given by other Government Departments in placing orders for requirements which can be produced in the penitentiary in order that Government contracts should be available in greater volume.³⁵

The orders of federal departments for the manufacture of things like ballot boxes, picnic tables, stone monuments, road signs, mailbags, rain gauges, printed forms, and plot and plant labels created the work for prisoners that was needed to justify vocational education and training programs.³⁶ Goods manufactured in prisons could not be sold in competition with those produced by civilians; thus, without a demand from government departments, incarcerated people would still have to work but solely at the jobs that maintained prisons.³⁷

Implementing Reforms at the Institutional Level

BETWEEN 1950 AND 1965 the administration in Kingston-area prisons were comprised of long-time Penitentiary Service employees with few exceptions.³⁸ These employees, responsible for implementing change in the day-to-day training and work of prisoners, had their own views of and established practices in operating prisons. In 1950, Harold Cleeton was the warden of Collins Bay Penitentiary, Richard M. Allen was the warden of Kingston Penitentiary, and the supervising matron of the Prison for Women was Lorraine Burke, who

34. Gibson, "Report of R. B. Gibson," 13–14.

35. Gibson, 13–14.

36. Dominion of Canada, *1951 Annual Report*, 33.

37. It was a long-standing practice that goods manufactured in prisons would not compete. Gibson, "Report of R. B. Gibson," 13–14; for more of this longer history, see Palmer, "Kingston Mechanics."

38. The hiring of Isabel J. Macneill as the first superintendent of P4W is one exception, which is discussed later in the article.

reported directly to Allen.³⁹ Allen and Cleeton both retired in 1954 after more than 40 years of service.⁴⁰ Following their retirements, the deputy warden of Collins Bay, V. S. J. Richmond, was promoted to warden and W. F. Johnstone, superintendent of the Federal Training Centre, was promoted to warden at Kingston Penitentiary. Burke served as supervising matron from 1950 until the organizational structure of P4W was changed in 1960.

Along with a new commissioner in 1960, there were additional staffing changes in local leadership. Warden Johnstone was promoted to an administrative position and David McLean succeeded him as warden of Kingston Penitentiary after 27 years of employment in the Penitentiary Service, which included working as deputy warden of Collins Bay between 1954 and 1956 and as warden at Dorchester Penitentiary from 1956 to 1960.⁴¹ In 1962 the warden of Collins Bay, V.S.J. Richmond, was appointed as warden at Kingston Pen, to quell controversy after an officer was murdered during his nightly rounds in late 1961.⁴² Richmond stayed at Kingston until 1965. With Richmond's transfer, Collins Bay Deputy Warden F. Smith was promoted to warden.⁴³ These (mostly) men in positions of leadership in Kingston-area prisons had long careers in the Penitentiary Service in varied positions and carried their own opinions about who deserved access to rehabilitative programs – which is to say that policy change from the top could, at times, trickle down slowly into practice. Under different wardens' leadership, the operations of Kingston Penitentiary, Collins Bay, and P4W received support from local organizations that generally formed strong professional, and at times personal, relationships with staff through their shared desire for reform and to ensure access to incarcerated people.

Although both organizations were relatively new, the John Howard Society of Ontario (JHS) and the Elizabeth Fry Society of Kingston (EFry Kingston) established themselves as key partners in supplementing the efforts of prisons to reform incarcerated people through the provision of their services, a large portion of which related to employment, and through their connections to

39. Dominion of Canada, *1951 Annual Report*, 10. Lorraine Burke assumed the position in July of 1950 after the retirement of Supervising Matron Amelia Burke, who had held the position since 1944. Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1945* (Ottawa: Printer to the King, 1945), 16.

40. Canada, *1955 Annual Report*, 11. Allen served half of his career as the warden of Kingston Penitentiary, from 1934 onwards.

41. Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1957* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1958), 11.

42. Pen. Stabbing Newspaper Clippings, November 1961–December 1962, John Howard Society of Ontario (JHSO) fonds, Institutions – Kingston Penitentiary, Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO).

43. "Staffing Changes," *Federal Corrections* 2, 3 (1962): 17.

the wider community.⁴⁴ The JHS was formally established in 1946.⁴⁵ Local branches of the society developed and expanded the network of organizations. Representatives in Kingston and from the overarching Ontario organization, based in Toronto, worked together and alongside Penitentiary Service staff. EFry Kingston was established in 1949 by a group of local women concerned with the conditions of incarceration.⁴⁶ Its members began visiting P4W and supported the first educational programs with their professional knowledge.⁴⁷ One of the first things the society did was lobby for the creation of a matron position to teach incarcerated women, as there had never been a formal teacher at P4W.⁴⁸

Formal Education Programs Begin at P4W

THE PRISON FOR WOMEN's first formal education program commenced when Dr. Helen Chataway began as the educational matron in August of 1949.⁴⁹ At first, she worked to establish an education program teaching basic literacy and numeracy, focusing on women with schooling below a Grade 8 level.⁵⁰ This included French and English writing and elementary arithmetic

44. Dominion of Canada, *1951 Annual Report*, 62, 64, 105–106.

45. "Report of the John Howard Society of Ontario," 1964, Matheson fonds, file 31, QUA. In 1929 the Toronto chief of police, General D. C. Draper, formed the Citizens' Service Organization after learning the Penitentiary Service offered no post-release support. The organization renamed itself the Prisoners Rehabilitation Society in 1935 and then the John Howard Society of Ontario in 1946 to unify the work of prisoner aid societies across Canada.

46. Kathleen Healey, interview by Susan Jackson, 2 August 1977, interview 38, transcript and recording, Dean of Women Oral History Project, box 3, file 38, QUA. See also Sangster, "Reforming Women's Reformatories," for more on the early establishment of other Elizabeth Fry Societies, including in Toronto.

47. The founders of EFry Kingston included a lawyer, a social worker, an artist and art instructor, and a physical education teacher. Hannah-Moffat, *Punishment in Disguise*, 109; Faith Avis, *Women in Cages: The Prison for Women and the Elizabeth Fry Society* (Markham, Ontario: Quarry Press, 2002), 58.

48. In comparison, a teacher position existed in Kingston Penitentiary since 1851 and in Collins Bay Penitentiary since it opened in 1930. Douglas K. Griffin, *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Review of Penitentiary Education and Training, 1978–1979* (Ottawa: Education and Training Division, Canadian Penitentiary Service, 1978), 22.

49. Helen D. Chataway earned her PhD in chemistry from McGill in 1926 and worked in Ottawa as a researcher for companies including the Hudson Bay Company before her appointment at the Prison for Women. See Helen Drinkwater Chataway, "The Sulphuration of Fatty Acids," PhD dissertation, McGill University, 1926.

50. School Report, 7 November 1949, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC. For more on academic education in P4W, see Katie-Marie McNeill, "Lessons in Womanhood: Education at the Prison for Women, 1934–1965," MEd thesis, Queen's University, 2017, 62–92; on prison education for men, see Lucien Morin, ed., *On Prison Education* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1981).

classes, which were supplemented by EFry Kingston volunteers who taught French as an additional language and art.⁵¹ Once a regular schedule of elementary academic courses was established, Chataway began to develop some early vocational education.

In close collaboration with EFry Kingston, Chataway organized a St. John's Ambulance course on home nursing that began in late 1949 and finished in early 1950.⁵² Women attended bi-weekly classes in the evening for eight weeks, and eleven women passed the course and received certification in home nursing.⁵³ Despite the support from EFry Kingston, training in nursing skills did not develop into a regular course option. Chataway also offered individual typing instruction, which, like nursing, trained incarcerated women in vocational skills that could lead to acceptable employment for women.⁵⁴ Women practised typing in short sessions scattered throughout the day around their work schedules.⁵⁵ Both of these vocational training opportunities were sporadic in nature, and while they provided useful skills, there was no direct path to employment upon release in contrast to the trades taught in men's prisons. A well-educated woman herself, Chataway soon found issues with the ways incarcerated women and employees were trained at P4W.⁵⁶

Chataway voiced her concerns. To appease her, the deputy commissioner of the Penitentiary Service wrote to Allen, the Kingston Penitentiary warden – not directly to Chataway – explaining that incarcerated women could not truly be considered students and that keeping incarcerated women busy with events would be easier for all involved.⁵⁷ She was not appeased. Dr. Chataway resigned in 1951 and was replaced by Mrs. Vera Hudson, who took the revised title of educational officer – the position was renamed to match the nomenclature of men's prisons – where she would remain until 1960.⁵⁸ Over the next decade, Hudson kept much of the previously established educational programming the same, with academic classes that focused on elementary literacy and numeracy, individualized typing lessons, and occasional home nursing

51. School Report, 17 October 1949, 2, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

52. School Report, 4 March 1950, 1, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

53. School Report, 9 December 1949, and School Report, 4 April 1950, 2, both in RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

54. Sangster, *Girl Trouble*, 114–116. Girls incarcerated at the Ontario Training School for Girls (OTSG) were given vocational training in similar domestic and feminine pursuits, including typing and hairdressing. Sangster describes how girls were classified and those deemed "specials" were given only vocational training of this nature and no academic education.

55. Special Report of the Work of One Day, 28 March 1950, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

56. Memo to Commissioner, 22 March 1950, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

57. Memorandum to Warden of Kingston Penitentiary Re: Prison for Women Re: Educational Officer's Report, 22 November 1951, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

58. School Report, 9 February 1951, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

courses.⁵⁹ However, during her tenure, Hudson supervised some changes to vocational training including the addition of an experimental hairdressing and salon course that was offered in 1952.

The trial salon opened in January of 1952 and was stocked with second-hand salon equipment purchased by a Penitentiary Service staffer at the Ottawa headquarters.⁶⁰ Women submitted applications to join the limited class list. The six students selected by Warden Allen out of the pool of applicants were chosen on the basis of their approaching release dates and their young ages.⁶¹ The small course was taught in the evenings by a contract instructor, supported by Hudson, over a six-month period. Every woman enrolled passed the course with ease. Hairdressing and skills in the salon could be used to find employment anywhere across the country after release, within a field where women dominated.

Women cycled in and out of P4W frequently, as most received sentences of two to three years in length.⁶² From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, many women entered P4W for charges related to drug addiction, although the number of women incarcerated who struggled with addiction had decreased significantly by 1964.⁶³ In 1960, approximately 60 per cent of women at P4W were considered “drug addicts,” and in 1964 that proportion had dropped to only 34 per cent of women. This decrease was attributed to treatment in the prison, as half of the new admissions in 1964 were charged with possession or trafficking.⁶⁴ Typically, a handful of women were admitted on manslaughter charges each year, and in the majority of these cases, it was the woman’s first commitment to a carceral institution.⁶⁵ The annual report records do not connect the ages of women to their crimes and their subsequent sentences, nor do they provide additional information about who these women were, but other sources provide glimpses of P4W’s prisoners.

59. September School Report, 22 October 1951, 2, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

60. Memo: Equipment for Home Grooming Course, 26 November 1951, RG73, 4-21-23, vol. 113, LAC.

61. Penny McCormack, “Vocational Training – A Beauty Parlour,” *Telescope*, September 1952, 26, Gaucher/Munn Penal Press Collection.

62. Forty-two of the 66 women admitted to P4W in 1961 had sentences between two and three years in length. Fifty-seven of 86 women admitted in 1963 had sentences between two and three years. Canada, 1961 *Annual Report*, 54; Canada, 1963 *Annual Report*, 71.

63. Confidential letter from Macneill to Matheson, 26 May 1965, Matheson fonds, file 202, QUA. This letter also expresses Macneill’s extreme frustration with the Penitentiary Service before her later resignation in October 1965, discussed below.

64. See confidential letter from Macneill to Matheson for commentary on treatment progress. For a list of crimes of all those admitted to federal prison in 1964, see Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1964* (Kingston: Kingston Penitentiary Printer, 1965), 51.

65. Canada, 1963 *Annual Report*, 53.

A few visibly non-white women can be found in group photos printed in the “Feminine Features” sections of the *Telescope*, the prisoner press publication of the Kingston Penitentiary, but the short stories detailing activities at P4W provide no further information about racialized women’s experiences while incarcerated.⁶⁶ Admission records indicate that women were identified by “racial origin,” “birthplace,” and “citizenship.”⁶⁷ Official reports from Chataway and Hudson share information about incarcerated women and morale generally and rarely offer commentary on individual women. The one instance in which Chataway produced a special report about her daily work, in 1950, documents a conversation with an Indigenous woman, who is identified as Indigenous by her experience in a residential school, about career options and the woman’s aspirations to work with children in some capacity after her release.⁶⁸ This brief mention indicates the presence of Indigenous women in P4W but, like the “Feminine Features” photographs, does not provide much information about racialized women’s experiences while incarcerated.⁶⁹

The women incarcerated at P4W experienced a degree of infantilization, as they were called “girls” regardless of actual age – although there were indeed teenage prisoners. For example, between 1961 and 1964, women under the age of 25 comprised between 21 per cent and 30 per cent of new admissions and included two 16-year-olds and two 17-year-olds.⁷⁰ The remainder of new admissions in this same period consisted mainly of middle-aged women. Older women – that is, those grouped in the records as “50+” – comprised 3 per cent (two women) of admissions in 1961, 1.5 per cent (one woman) in 1962, 14 per cent (twelve women) in 1963, and 4 per cent (three women) in

66. Del Burns, “Feminine Features,” *Telescope*, May/June 1956, 32–33, Gaucher/Munn Penal Press Collection.

67. Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1950* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1951), 160.

68. Special Report of the Work of One Day, 28 March 1950. In regular School Reports, both Chataway and Hudson name the women who have completed correspondence coursework or who have graduated from courses offered in the prison, but LAC has removed the list of names from view in these records to protect the identities of women who were incarcerated.

69. For an analysis of the increasing proportion of Indigenous women being incarcerated at the Mercer Reformatory around the same time, see Sangster, “Criminalizing the Colonized,” 36.

70. Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1962* (Kingston: Kingston Penitentiary Printers, 1963), 57; Canada, *1964 Annual Report*, 63. These reports group women’s age in the following categories: 19 and under, 20 to 24, 25 to 29, 30 to 34, 35 to 39, 40 to 44, 45 to 49, and 50+. In the confidential letter from Macneill to Matheson, 26 May 1965, Macneill comments on the age of some women under her supervision as being only 17 to 21 years old.

1964.⁷¹ The overall population remained small throughout the period of study, ranging from a high of 124 women in 1960 to a low of 81 in 1956.⁷²

For these older women, vocational training was not offered. Instead, recreational pursuits were encouraged. Gardening was seen as a productive pastime that encouraged older women prisoners to contribute to the prison, through their labour with small vegetable crops or through maintenance and beautification of the grounds with flowerbeds.⁷³ This work was unpaid, as it was considered recreational, and further solidified older women's status as less valued and unworthy of vocational training spots. While younger women enjoyed gardening as well, it was one of many opportunities available to them within P4W in contrast to the few options for older women. EFry Kingston supported gardening as a productive pastime for women, including younger women who demonstrated an interest, through donations of young plants, seeds, tools, and expertise from volunteers themselves.⁷⁴

Incarcerated women were also taught the types of knowledge, habits, and hobbies that were appropriate for post-prison social inclusion through handicrafts. EFry Kingston volunteers who visited P4W on Thursday evenings for activities taught women how to sew, weave, make jewellery, wood burn, make belts, and lace slippers as part of their services in the prison.⁷⁵ Although many of the women had been able to sew, crochet, and knit before their incarceration, they were taught new techniques to hone their skills; those who did not already know these crafts were taught, as there was not much else to do to pass time outside of work. Women could send their crafted goods to relatives

71. Canada, *1961 Annual Report*, 56; Canada, *1962 Annual Report*, 57; Canada, *1963 Annual Report*, 73; Canada, *1964 Annual Report*, 63.

72. Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1960* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1961), 60; Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1956* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957), 59. There was a change in the presentation of prisoner population data in annual reports in 1961 following the appointment of MacLeod. Previously, each institution had reported individually at the end of the commissioner's overall report, providing data on its prisoner population. Between 1961 and 1964, data in annual reports were generalized across the entire federal population instead of by institution. P4W's data on women prisoners was still identifiable because it was the sole institution for women. In 1965, the Penitentiary Service stopped providing data on prisoners in appendices and instead included only a shortened, narrative report to be published for the public.

73. School Report, 11 August 1952, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC. Other short-lived recreation for older women prisoners included lawn bowling. "Educational and Recreational Reports at the P4W," in School Report, 1 October 1956, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC. Another popular pastime for older women was watching TV, which was introduced in 1957. Canada, *1957 Annual Report*, 69.

74. School Report, 17 July 1956, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

75. School Report, 31 January 1957, appendix, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC; Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1958* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1959), 75.

and friends as gifts, have the goods put aside for safekeeping, or sell their work to earn additional income.⁷⁶ Hudson would coordinate with the hobbycraft officer from Kingston Penitentiary so that incarcerated women could sell their creations alongside the goods produced by the men at Kingston Penitentiary during annual sales, bazaars, and exhibitions.⁷⁷

Similarly, prison labour in P4W involved work that was traditionally dominated by women. Incarcerated women who maintained the institution washed and ironed laundry, cooked for staff and prisoners, and cleaned the prison to sustain operations, while those who worked in prison industry sewed and repaired uniforms in the shirt factory, which produced garments for the Penitentiary Service and other governmental agencies.⁷⁸ These work placements shared the same logic as P4W's vocational training: teaching women how to do work typically done within the home that could translate to self-employment, such as taking in laundry, if necessary. Women were responsible for the operations of the prison on a daily basis, but when something required repair or renovation incarcerated men were dispatched from Collins Bay or Kingston Penitentiary to fix the issue. By stressing women's domestic labour, assuming older women did not require occupational training, and streaming selected younger women into gendered job categories, prison vocational education in the mid-20th century is connected to the earlier history of women's prison experiences.

Labour and Learning at Kingston Penitentiary

MEN INCARCERATED AT Kingston Penitentiary were assigned to work crews. Some crews maintained the prison, as well as the P4W, working in trades such as plumbing, electrical, and carpentry. Some worked in industrial shops doing tailoring or printing work for government departments, and some worked in positions that supported operations such as agriculture and food production, cooking, and cleaning. Inmates who were interested in learning a trade or skills were confronted by more seasoned prisoners who jealously guarded their positions in skilled trades.⁷⁹ For example, in 1957 there were nineteen men working as carpenters on new construction, eighteen men working as carpenters for maintenance, twelve motor mechanics, eleven plumbers, and nine electricians of a total prison workforce of 934 men.⁸⁰ Prison labour in

76. Report, 31 January 1957, 2, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC. For example, between late September 1956 and mid-January 1957 incarcerated women made \$1,165.33 from handicraft sales.

77. School Report, 14 August 1952, RG73, 4-17-7, vol. 108, LAC.

78. Canada, 1961 *Annual Report*, 27.

79. "Beginner's Guide to the Pen," November 1966, *Saturday Night*, 38, Matheson fonds, file 259, QUA.

80. Canada, 1957 *Annual Report*, 54–55.

trades at Kingston Penitentiary that year accounted for approximately 7 per cent of the available positions. Beyond the potential benefits of having a trade post-release, the few positions in trades were coveted because they offered work that was less monotonous than operations and offered a chance for a better relationship with correctional officers and vocational officers, which could be beneficial in the prison economy. Additionally, these positions were coveted as there was not enough maintenance work or industrial work to employ everyone year-round. This meant that many men would be given make-work positions.⁸¹ Incarcerated men and the Penitentiary Service alike saw this as a problem. The Penitentiary Service reported that “it should be realized that the square feet of space available in our shops is not sufficient to permit maximum production from the number of inmates confined, and on many occasions, particularly during the winter months, excess population have to be detailed to shops where there is neither the equipment nor the work to keep them gainfully employed.”⁸²

Another way for incarcerated men to earn money while in prison was to participate in hobbycraft in cells, first allowed in Kingston Penitentiary in the fall of 1949, if men purchased their own tools and supplies. Prison administration believed that hobbycraft offered incarcerated men an outlet that simultaneously prevented idleness and improved discipline, because it represented a privilege that could be taken away as another form of punishment. Men engaged in leathercraft, writing, and painting to pass time, although woodworking was by far the most popular activity.⁸³ The quality of the work by men incarcerated at Kingston Penitentiary was known and men received orders for custom work from those who had seen their work displayed and sold at fairs facilitated by prison staff. The members of the JHS were among those who appreciated the quality of incarcerated men’s work. For example, A. M. Kirkpatrick, executive director of the John Howard Society, asked Warden Johnstone in the spring of 1955 to arrange a custom purse to be made for an unnamed woman. Specifically, he asked the warden to find someone to make an over-the-shoulder “blue morocco or calf [skin] bag, of a darker rather than light shade of blue” that was “about 7x10 in size” with a red lining.⁸⁴ The friendship between Kirkpatrick and Johnstone represented the reciprocal relationship between the Penitentiary Service and the JHS. Specifically, the Penitentiary Service validated the authority of the JHS, and the JHS supported

81. One example includes 1961’s “Operation Blitzclean,” a project to repaint most institutions. Canada, *1961 Annual Report*, 18.

82. Dominion of Canada, *1951 Annual Report*, 66.

83. Dominion of Canada, 65–69.

84. A. M. Kirkpatrick to Warden Johnstone, Kingston, 20 April 1955, up to and including 1957 (Correspondence), JHSO fonds, A.O. A reminder request was included in a subsequent letter about an upcoming visit: Kirkpatrick to Johnstone, 11 May 1955, up to and including 1957 (Correspondence), JHSO fonds, A.O.

the overarching goals of the Penitentiary Service.⁸⁵ Despite both men's belief in rehabilitation through work, including hobbycraft, there was always a shortage of meaningful work at Kingston Penitentiary.

A formerly incarcerated man wrote in *Saturday Night* magazine about the grim prospects of training he had encountered while in Kingston Penitentiary.⁸⁶ He wrote that the routines and rhythms of the prison had to be absorbed through osmosis, as no one revealed what the series of ringing bells signified. Once a prisoner had learned enough about the flow of days inside, he was assigned work that would teach him important things such as how to not complain, to do the same things over and over again, and to fly under the radar by working neither too fast nor too slow.⁸⁷ The author had worked as a range cleaner and quickly learned how to look busy during the regular rounds of the uninterested guard. Clearly, the reality of prison labour for men incarcerated in Kingston Penitentiary was very different than the rehabilitative philosophy touted by the top brass of the Penitentiary Service.

The Penitentiary Service perceived the men incarcerated at Kingston Penitentiary as a collective, generally older on average and with more offences than those incarcerated at Collins Bay Penitentiary, although the reality was less distinct. Both Kingston and Collins Bay Penitentiaries admitted men and teenage boys without prior convictions at similar rates during this time – they comprised between 13 per cent and 21 per cent of new admissions to Kingston Pen and between 12 per cent and 19.5 per cent of those to Collins Bay – but Kingston Penitentiary admitted men with many more previous convictions than did Collins Bay Penitentiary.⁸⁸ This meant that both institutions also shared similar rates of overall recidivism among their population, of more than 80 per cent.⁸⁹ However, Kingston Penitentiary routinely had men with 30 or more previous convictions in its population (with one man having 48 prior convictions) and the highest previous conviction average: 36.9 offences, compared with Collins Bay Penitentiary's highest previous conviction average of 23.8.⁹⁰ This information on prisoners' previous convictions reveals that the Penitentiary Service's rhetoric surrounding its differentiation between

85. Garland, "Governmentality," 175.

86. "Beginner's Guide to the Pen," 38.

87. "Beginner's Guide to the Pen," 38.

88. The Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries between 1950 and 1960 provide data on prisoners' previous convictions by institution. Between 1961 and 1965, the annual reports contain aggregated data across all prisons. See Canada, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1953* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), 60; Canada, *1958 Annual Report*, 55; Canada, *1960 Annual Report*, 52.

89. While Collins Bay Penitentiary was originally used to incarcerate young and first-time prisoners, it incarcerated only young prisoners after the opening of the Federal Training Centre in 1952, which then took the majority of first-offence admissions.

90. Canada, *1955 Annual Report*, 55.

institutions based on categories of prisoners was not grounded in actual penal practices. These admission statistics reveal some of the governance practices of the Penitentiary Service, including its ideological flexibility around classification when faced with overcrowding.

Between 1950 and 1965 the populations of prisoners at Kingston and Collins Bay Penitentiaries fluctuated in the hundreds, underscoring the constant overcrowding experienced. In 1952, 810 men occupied Kingston Penitentiary; this number ballooned to 1,126 men in 1959.⁹¹ Similarly, Collins Bay had its smallest population near the beginning of the period, with 348 men in 1951; this grew to 472 men in 1957, when the prison was at its fullest.⁹² As a proportion of the general population, Collins Bay Penitentiary admitted far more young men under the age of 25 than Kingston Penitentiary did on an annual basis. Of a total population of 350, Collins Bay admitted 37 young men and teenagers in 1950; in comparison, Kingston Penitentiary admitted 14 prisoners under the age of 21 among its 821-person population.⁹³ Over 10 per cent of Collins Bay admissions were under 21 in 1950 compared with about 2.5 per cent of Kingston Penitentiary's. The differences in age were less dramatic when including teenagers and men up to the age of 25 at each institution, but the contrast was still stark. Prisoners under 25 accounted for 30 per cent of the population at Collins Bay in 1957 but only 13 per cent at Kingston Pen.⁹⁴ This trend continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with more young men, both proportionately and in number, being sent to Collins Bay Penitentiary, which offered a greater volume and variety of vocational opportunities than Kingston Penitentiary.

Compared with P4W, we have more access to the thoughts and experiences of some incarcerated men because of their contributions to publications of the prisoner press.⁹⁵ However, these publications represent only *some* men, and what we do know about prisoners as collective groups at each institution largely comes from the Penitentiary Service's annual reports, for which state statisticians prepared a detailed process of collecting information and creating changing categories. This knowledge formed part of an apparatus of security and allowed the state not only to know its prison population at various scales

91. Canada, *1952 Annual Report*, 64; Canada, *1959 Annual Report*, 59.

92. Dominion of Canada, *1951 Annual Report*, 103; Canada, *1957 Annual Report*, 122.

93. Dominion of Canada, *1950 Annual Report*, 85, 49 (institutional population sizes), 156 (total under-21 admissions).

94. Canada, *1957 Annual Report*, 52 (ages at each institution), 61 (Kingston Penitentiary population), 122 (Collins Bay population).

95. On the complexities of representing the "voice" of prisoners in publications, see Clarkson and Munn, *Disruptive Prisoners*, 82–102.

but also to calculate the accompanying risks to the rest of the civilian population as trends in incarceration ebbed and flowed.⁹⁶

Unemployment prior to incarceration was a common experience of men in prisons across the country.⁹⁷ Unsurprisingly, crimes against property – including theft, breaking and entering, and fraud – were among the most common offences.⁹⁸ Incarcerated men had often lacked educational or vocational opportunities prior to criminalization. While men's employment status before incarceration at Kingston and Collins Bay Penitentiaries cannot be extrapolated from the nationwide data, only Collins Bay was seen as deserving of vocational programs to support employment options post-release. However, individual men at Kingston Penitentiary could try to prove their worthiness to penitentiary staff to access better jobs and vocational training.

One way the men tried to prove their worthiness was through upgrading their education qualifications to a Grade 8 equivalency to meet the eligibility criteria for the vocational programs at Collins Bay. Men could also enrol in correspondence courses of their choice, but they had to do the work largely independently and in their cells during evenings and weekends.⁹⁹ It is clear that education was not deemed a priority for men in Kingston Penitentiary. Completing Grade 8 equivalent education was supported by four full-time teachers who taught daily, but schooling came secondary to work.¹⁰⁰ Those enrolled in school typically attended classes for three half days a week around their working schedule. Students who had the lowest levels of schooling also received additional support from peer “inmate teachers,” who facilitated classroom learning for two hours every evening Monday through Thursday.¹⁰¹ Men in school took a pay cut, as they were not paid for time in class, which diminished their ability to buy canteen items like cigarettes.¹⁰² Lessening one's canteen options was a substantial sacrifice made for potential access to vocational training.

Those who upgraded their academic qualifications could apply to transfer to Collins Bay Penitentiary for a full-time vocational program if they were in their teens, twenties, or thirties. Men at Kingston Penitentiary could only hope to access vocational training if they could swing a transfer. When Collins

96. Garland, “Governmentality,” 181; Rose, O'Malley and Valverde, “Governmentality,” 95.

97. In 1963, 65.8 per cent of men had been unemployed before incarceration; in 1961 this figure was 61 per cent; and in 1956, 54 per cent. Canada, 1963 *Annual Report*, 51; Canada, 1961 *Annual Report*, 33; Canada, 1956 *Annual Report*, 171.

98. Canada, 1961 *Annual Report*, 59.

99. Dominion of Canada, 1950 *Annual Report*, 15.

100. Bert Belfontaine, “Three R's behind Bars,” *Telescope*, February 1959, 26, Gaucher/Munn Penal Press Collection.

101. Belfontaine, 26.

102. Belfontaine, 26.

Bay first opened, its beds were reserved for teenagers and men in their early twenties serving a sentence for their first serious crime or a series of petty crimes, but by the 1950s, fortunately for some men at Kingston Penitentiary, the prison began to allow recidivists in their early thirties to participate in training.¹⁰³

A Preferred Class: Collins Bay Penitentiary

LIKE MANY OTHER Canadian penitentiaries, Collins Bay opened and incarcerated men before the full institution was built. This way, prisoner labour could be used to finish the project, which was more efficient than transporting temporary work crews of men to and from the site from Kingston Penitentiary.¹⁰⁴ Collins Bay Penitentiary was designed to incarcerate a “preferred class” of “young and reformable offenders.”¹⁰⁵ It was envisioned to incarcerate only those who were seen to deserve another chance. This second chance would be offered in the form of vocational training, enabling men to find steady, respectable employment following release.

By 1950, Collins Bay Penitentiary offered full-time vocational training in brick masonry, sheet metal work, plumbing, and carpentry, with plans for additional courses. By 1959, automotive mechanics, electrical, machine shop, welding, and a part-time barbering course had been added to regular programming.¹⁰⁶ Those who finished their courses and those awaiting enrolment had the ability to work in said trades on the construction of new buildings on site as Collins Bay Penitentiary expanded. In comparison with the aforementioned example of trades work at Kingston Pen in 1957, Collins Bay offered many more positions for vocational training and experience. In 1957 there were twelve maintenance carpenters, nine building carpenters, nine electricians, nine plumbers, and six motor mechanics out of a prison workforce of 457, while an additional 102 men were enrolled in full-time vocational training. This meant that 32 per cent of men incarcerated at Collins Bay Penitentiary were using a skilled trade on a regular basis.¹⁰⁷ These skilled trades programs and job placements were also designed with industry standards in mind.

103. Answers to Questionnaire concerning Vocational Training of Penitentiary Inmates, n.d., p. 2, RG73, 1-21-16, vol 76, part 12, LAC.

104. Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Penitentiaries for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1931* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1932), 10. In 1931, 152 men were transferred to the Preferred Class Penitentiary at Collins Bay permanently after temporary crews of prisoners had prepared the institution.

105. Dominion of Canada, *1931 Annual Report*, 10; Dominion of Canada, *1950 Annual Report*, 16.

106. Answers to Questionnaire concerning Vocational Training, Appendix A.

107. Canada, *1957 Annual Report*, 54–55.

The Penitentiary Service worked closely with the federal Advisory Council on Vocational Training, provincial apprenticeship programs, and the Department of Labour to ensure training done in Collins Bay would be recognized in the civilian world.¹⁰⁸ Those who successfully completed their training were given a certificate of competency at a graduation ceremony that was held each fall starting in 1950.¹⁰⁹ The ceremony was quite official and included remarks from local leaders, such as the mayor of Kingston, and representatives from the JHS.¹¹⁰ According to official sources, the ceremony and certificates that were proudly accepted on stage meant a great deal to the recipients and their families.¹¹¹ The certificates, which indicated the amount of apprentice training completed while incarcerated, helped men find employment post-release – if they could find employers who did not discriminate against a criminal record. The JHS worked in close co-operation with the classification officers of Collins Bay Penitentiary to support men's job searches after release.

There was an exchange of information, often of a very personal and sensitive nature, between the Collins Bay classification officers and the JHS, which was justified as necessary to support job searches. Letters were exchanged that contained information about soon-to-be released men's personality, "temperament," training completed, family status, and intended place of residence, as well as staff's personal opinions about the men.¹¹² For example, one report from a JHS caseworker sent to Collins Bay Penitentiary stated that the caseworker believed one man frequently lied and "that everything he had ever told us were lies and therefore I did not do a great deal for him," adding that "the only good aspect about all this is that [name redacted] has not offended again, as yet."¹¹³ The letters were one way in which the classification officers facilitated a sharing of power with JHS volunteers, who then became the de facto gatekeepers and judges over the lives of men who had finished serving their sentences. In this way the JHS, while intending to support the well-being of criminalized men, instead bolstered the surveillance of the state and allowed the state to control men beyond their court-ordered punishments.¹¹⁴

108. Dominion of Canada, *1950 Annual Report*, 27.

109. Dominion of Canada, 88.

110. Program – Graduation Day, Collins Bay Penitentiary, 24 September 1953, 2, Federal Penitentiaries – Collins Bay (up to and including 1957), JHSO fonds, AO.

111. Dominion of Canada, *1951 Annual Report*, 31.

112. Beames to Edwards, 22 April 1952, Federal Penitentiaries – Collins Bay (up to and including 1957), JHSO fonds, AO.

113. Beames to Edwards, appendix, 2.

114. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170, 184–185. Foucault explains that "the success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchal observation; normalizing judgment and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, examination" (p. 170). Hannah-Moffat, *Punishment in Disguise*, 113–114. Kelly Hannah-Moffat further explores the role that community organizations hold in the governance of

The power of the information was appreciated by the people sharing it, as indicated in correspondence between C.A.M. Edwards, a Collins Bay Penitentiary classification officer, and Kirkpatrick, the executive director of JHS, indicates. Kirkpatrick wrote to Edwards with concern that JHS was sharing too much privileged information with the Penitentiary Service, as some members noted this was not common practice among other Canadian John Howard Societies.¹¹⁵ Kirkpatrick explained that the reports to Collins Bay Penitentiary had stopped while the society determined the legality of sharing personal information of formerly incarcerated men, but he reassured Edwards that he hoped a solution would be reached soon that would continue information sharing. Kirkpatrick wrote that JHS Ontario “appreciate the value of these reports to you and assure you that we will give the matter every consideration with a view to finding a way, *even if unofficially* [emphasis added] through our Kingston representative, to make available to you the information you so desire and need.”¹¹⁶ Kirkpatrick was willing to ignore the legal and ethical concerns about information sharing to maintain the close relationship between the society and Collins Bay Penitentiary staff.

Renewed Calls for Reform and New Leadership

FOLLOWING THE ARCHAMBAULT Report, another investigation into the criminal justice system, the Fauteux Report, presented its findings in 1956. This investigation was similarly spurred by riots, in 1954, also largely related to overcrowding and a lack of opportunity.¹¹⁷ The Fauteux Report echoed many of the recommendations of the Archambault Report. Its 44 recommendations reiterated the position that re-education should be the focal point of Canadian prisons and that to make it so required further classification and separation of prisoners.¹¹⁸ Both those who worked within the prison system and those reviewing it externally believed there were certain types of people and prisoners who could be rehabilitated and others who could not – and the latter had to be kept separate. Commissioner Gibson continued with reforms from the Archambault and Fauteux Reports until his appointment as special adviser to

prisoners, although in the context of women prisoners, through both the additional layers of responsabilization they place on prisoners and through the state’s co-option of legitimacy from community-based partners in corrections; Hannah-Moffat, “Prisons That Empower: Neo-liberal Governance in Canadian Women’s Prisons,” *British Journal of Criminology* 40, 3 (2000): 520, 528.

115. Kirkpatrick to Edwards, 14 December 1953, Federal Penitentiaries – Collins Bay (up to and including 1957), JHSO fonds, AO. Edwards would later become the warden of P4W in the early 1970s.

116. Kirkpatrick to Edwards.

117. Clarkson and Munn, *Disruptive Prisoners*, 192.

118. Fauteux et al., *Report*, 87–90.

the Minister of Justice on correctional planning in the fall of 1960. Much like Gibson some fourteen years earlier, his successor, A. J. MacLeod, began his new role with enthusiasm and with a set of recommendations from which to base his operational plans.¹¹⁹

MacLeod hired additional staff in administrative and instructor positions, developed more staff training, and promoted experienced front-line employees to new senior administrative positions to tackle the Fauteux Report recommendations.¹²⁰ Approval of and support for reform came from the Penitentiary Act of 1961, effective 1 April 1962, which authorized a reorganization of the Penitentiary Service.¹²¹ The service was reorganized into four divisions: Inmate Training, Organization and Administration, Finance and Services, and Penitentiary Industries.¹²² Within this reorganizing and hiring boom, MacLeod appointed Isabel J. Macneill to fill the newly created position of superintendent of the Prison for Women.¹²³ The position divided responsibility for P4W between the warden of Kingston Penitentiary and the superintendent. The superintendent was responsible for all forms of programming – educational, therapeutic, employment, and daily operations – while the Kingston Penitentiary warden remained responsible for finances and human resources to keep the two institutions as one administrative unit.¹²⁴

Implementation at the Institutional Level: Letter vs. Spirit

MACNEILL INTRODUCED a variety of new training opportunities at P4W including business courses, such as bookkeeping, and home economics in a new model bungalow on prison grounds. She also paid women who enrolled in full-time academic coursework wages to make upgrading education equivalent to prison labour starting in 1960.¹²⁵ Women were paid at one of four different rates of pay for their education or work depending on staff's assessment of their achievement or effort, with some wages funnelled directly into savings for life after release. Basic pay, or bare minimum, was 25 cents per day; average

119. Notes on the Fauteux Report, Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario Generally, 1, RG73 1-25-119 vol 86, LAC.

120. Canada, 1961 *Annual Report*, 1–2, 13–14.

121. Canada, 1962 *Annual Report*, 1–4.

122. Canada, 1961 *Annual Report*, 6.

123. Resume in letter to Dr. Barbara Kay, 11 July 1966, Appendix B, Isabel Macneill fonds (hereafter Macneill fonds), MG1 vol. 3649, file 4, Nova Scotia Archives.

124. Superintendent – Terms of Reference from Commissioner of Penitentiaries, c. 1960, Macneill fonds, MG1 vol. 3649, file 2, HA; confidential letter from Macneill to Matheson, 26 May 1965.

125. Peter Sypnowich, "Inside Canada's Prison for Women," *Star Weekly Magazine*, 10 August 1963, 2; Isabel Macneill, "Some Comments on My Conflict with the Penitentiary Service," n.d., 2, Matheson fonds, file 258, QUA.

pay was 35 cents per day; above average was 45 cents; and “outstanding” work was paid at 55 cents per day.¹²⁶ Incarcerated women had more choice in their placements than in the past but still consulted with staff on their choices. P4W staff also helped arrange employment following release in more traditional fields like nursing.¹²⁷

EFry Kingston and Macneill had a strong working relationship, especially regarding the vocational opportunities for incarcerated women. In addition to a continuation of its previous activities in the prison, the society took on supervisory roles regarding incarcerated women who were approaching release. Macneill explained the arrangement between EFry Kingston and P4W to her colleagues in *Federal Corrections*, a staff newsletter: “All inmates in the Prison for Women are eligible for pre-release, a month’s parole under the supervision of the Elizabeth Fry Society Rehabilitation Officer. This may consist of a block placement in a hospital, restaurant, cleaning plant. It may be day work, cleaning, cooking, painting with accredited housewives. It may be social, with visits to Elizabeth Fry members’ homes or shopping.”¹²⁸ The partnership between P4W and EFry Kingston shows how reforms created space for prisoner aid societies to expand operations within prisons, which helped to legitimize the prisoner rehabilitation efforts of both EFry Kingston and the Penitentiary Service. While these opportunities provided job experiences for incarcerated women, these pre-release placements also created new layers of surveillance of criminalized women – much like the work of the JHS with criminalized men – and further ingratiated EFry Kingston with prison administration.

Despite Macneill’s seemingly more progressive approach to vocational training, she still held notions of which prisoners were deserving and which were undeserving; these ideas influenced which women had access to certain things. For example, older women who had been incarcerated more than once accused Macneill of favouritism for her choice to place mostly young women in the new dormitory, which had been completed in 1962. She brushed off the concerns as jealousy and explained that women “who were trying [to reform] received more attention from staff, but anyone was free to change and receive attention.”¹²⁹

Between 1960 and 1965, changes and increased choice also came to the men incarcerated at Collins Bay and Kingston Penitentiaries. Men had new recreational time in the evening during which they could participate in games, sports, or hobbies once the workday was over. Previously, they had often been

126. Michele Landsberg, “Women in Prison: Behind Traditionally Barred Doors, Kingston Forces Inmates to Become Individuals,” *Globe and Mail*, 6 July 1964, 12.

127. Correspondence with Isabel Macneill, 10 July 1963, Matheson fonds, file 201, QUA. Macneill was working with Matheson’s connections at a hospital in Brockville to get an incarcerated woman hired as a nurse.

128. Isabel Macneill, “The Female Drug Addict,” *Federal Corrections* 3, 3 (1964): 4–5.

129. Macneill, “Some Comments,” 3.

locked in their cells after work until the following morning.¹³⁰ Additionally, Collins Bay was designated a medium-security prison, which removed some daily prisoner counts, made movement between areas in the prison freer, and removed armed guards from crews working outside the prison.¹³¹ While not directly related to the types of work available, the change in security designation certainly changed how men at Collins Bay could work, compared to their counterparts at the maximum-security Kingston Penitentiary.

A more robust set of selection criteria for trade training was introduced that involved consideration of previous work history and aptitude tests, but young men were still preferred and given easy access to upgrade their academic qualifications to meet the requirements for entering trade training programs.¹³² Men at Kingston Penitentiary still did not have access to vocational training unless they transferred to Collins Bay. The vocational offerings at Collins Bay remained largely the same, but the Penitentiary Service was working to expand the numbers of men that could be trained at once.¹³³ The Penitentiary Service was planning Canada-wide vocational training based on the programs at Collins Bay but was having difficulty not only recruiting and retaining qualified instructors but also updating training and equipment at a pace comparable with civilian standards.¹³⁴

As this Canada-wide planning process took place, discontent with operations at P4W was growing. Macneill believed that the majority of incarcerated people were “potentially good citizens” and needed an opportunity to demonstrate their potential first instead of demonstrating good citizenship in order to earn an opportunity like vocational training.¹³⁵ This did not align with the practices of her colleagues, however, even if it aligned with the philosophy put forth by the Archambault Report. Macneill felt unsupported and sabotaged by her male colleagues, who felt her approach to prison management was not punitive enough.¹³⁶ She was pushed out of her position as her responsibilities and authority were gradually designated elsewhere in the Penitentiary Service. Macneill resigned in 1965, followed by other key members of P4W’s staff, spurring a special joint House-Senate committee investigation.¹³⁷

130. Canada, *1961 Annual Report*, 4.

131. Canada, 2.

132. Canada, 11.

133. Canada, *1963 Annual Report*, 10.

134. Canada, *1964 Annual Report*, 4.

135. Isabel Macneill, statement in response to Clark, 28 March 1967, Matheson fonds, file 258, QUA.

136. Avis, *Women in Cages*, 79. For example, when food arrived from Collin’s Bay it was often rotten and moldy, and the warden was (conveniently) unavailable by phone for hours to resolve the issue.

137. Isabel Macneill, statement, 27 October 1966, Ian Watson fonds, MG 32 C69, vol. 86, LAC.

Conclusion

THE PENITENTIARY SERVICE OF CANADA ushered in reforms guided by two sets of recommendations led by two ambitious Commissioners of Penitentiaries between 1950 and 1965. The centrality of labour in the Canadian prison regime endured throughout this period of reform. Despite the two investigations into the problems that the Penitentiary Service was facing – and had created – the role of labour in prisons remained steadfast. The Archambault and Fauteux Commissions questioned how prison labour should be framed in broader discussions of prisoner rehabilitation but did not question the centrality of labour in day-to-day prison life, nor in the ideological underpinnings of the prison. Prison labour had been used to control incarcerated people and it continued to do so in Kingston-area prisons under the pretext of prisoner rehabilitation. Long-time Penitentiary Service employees served in the leadership positions that ran P4W, Kingston Penitentiary, and Collins Bay Penitentiary and they understood how these policies were intended to operate in practice. Those who deviated were pushed out of the Service.

This period of reform repositioned prison labour from a repayment to society to an opportunity for individual learning through vocational training programs. With this shift in intention came new characteristics to determine prisoners' worthiness to access programs, the main one being age. These characteristics were paired with older, established characteristics that demanded appropriate gendered and classed forms of prison labour from incarcerated people. The vocational programs offered in Prison for Women, Kingston Penitentiary, and Collins Bay Penitentiary between 1950 and 1965 demonstrate how young prisoners were preferred and chosen for limited spaces in vocational programs. All prisoners in these institutions had to work, but those deemed eligible were given positions that offered a modicum of a better chance of working-class employment post-release – or at least, that was the Penitentiary Service's intention. Young men were given access to skilled trades that would provide a stable career and a salary that could support a family. Women were trained and worked in fields that mirrored domestic labour in the home. Limited numbers of younger women were given special access to trial vocational training in women-dominated fields outside the home. Older men could try to prove they deserved rehabilitation through voluntary educational upgrades.

Foucault's concept of governmentality helps to explain the different types and degrees of value given to vocational programs by the Penitentiary Service, prisoner aid societies, and individual prisoners. Governmentality helps capture how the Penitentiary Service exercised power throughout Kingston-area prisons, and while it did not have a complete monopoly, it still held the most power of the three groups involved in vocational training.¹³⁸ The majority of

138. Garland, "Governmentality," 179.

sources that support this article come from the Penitentiary Service, personal records of prison administrators, and records from prisoner aid societies; therefore, it is difficult to ascertain prisoners' actual experiences of vocational programs, as these glimpses are filtered through an official narrative of rehabilitation. The records reveal how the Penitentiary Service, at times, acted incongruously with its own ideas surrounding classification of prisoners and differentiation of institutions. This article also reveals the continuity of prison governance, despite reform intentions, as labour remained gendered, classed, and a central component of incarceration.

Different people living, working, and volunteering in the prison system valued learning how to work to different degrees and for differing reasons. For prisoners, vocational education offered relief from boredom, an opportunity for training not previously accessible prior to incarceration, a way to find employment after their release, and a way to become respectable within appropriate gendered and classed boundaries. For volunteers from EFry Kingston and the JHS, vocational training in prisons provided an opportunity to demonstrate their expertise as reformers and strengthened their position as experts alongside prison administrators. For the Penitentiary Service, vocational training re-educated prisoners with new skills and habits to contribute economically after release, to avoid idleness, and to reduce rates of recidivism. Each of these groups had an interest in vocational training for different reasons and to varying degrees, and each held a different understanding of what a re-education on how to work would do for prisoners upon release.

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