

# Mansfield reformatory



Mansfield Reformatory The Mansfield Reformatory was built in the year 1886 and was originally built with intentions of humanely rehabilitating first-time offenders. The reformatory was initially applauded for creating a positive step forward for prison reform. It was later in 1978 that the reformatory's legacy was one of abuse, torture, and murder. It had been denounced for "brutalizing and inhuman conditions". Violence among inmates was an everyday way of life. Tales have been told of inmates being sliced by shanks, beaten by soap bars and even thrown from six-story high walk ways.

These tragic deaths were all triggered from petty grievances. It has been told that on one occasion after a riot; approximately one hundred and twenty inmates had been confined for several days in "the hole" with only twenty rooms to hold these prisoners. One room consisted of a toilet and a bunk and was not spacious by any means. During this time at least one inmate had been murdered and hidden in the corner of the room under bedding material for the several days to follow. The "sweat box" was a special type of torture used on African American inmates and Caucasian prisoners escaped this punishment.

Along with the murders of countless prisoners, a prison farmer and his family, the warder and his wife also had died at the Mansfield Reformatory. After ninety-four years of operation, 154, 000 inmates had passed through its gates as a working prison. Eventually in the year 1990 the Mansfield Reformatory was shut down. Mansfield Reformatory Preservation Society (MRPS) took over ownership and unsealed the prison to the public. Tours, over-night ghost hunts and ghost walks are now held on a regular basis at the reformatory.

Since opened to the public as an attraction it has been considered among ghost hunters as the most active haunted place in the United States. Paranormal investigators have captured numerous EVPs, standing for electronic voice phenomena which generated noises that resemble speech, have reports of unexplained cold spots and equipment malfunctions. The reformatory has earned itself much attention and has been the set for four movies including Harry and Walter Go to New York, Tango and Crash, Air Force One, and The Shawshank Redemption. Not to mention Godsmack made this the scene for their "Awake" musicvideo and Marilyn Manson has done photography inside this spooky building. The history inside the walls of the Mansfield Reformatory makes it an interesting place to tour first hand. Tours are held on Saturdays and Sundays, there are four guided tours to choose from. The West Tower Tour includes a tour from the guard tower. From a higher perspective you can see the view of the cemetery where prisoners have been buried and assigned number is marked on their headstone. This tour takes you through the Big Dig, which is the underground tunnel system. This tour consists of excessive stair climbing.

The East Cell Block Tours travels through the length of the east cell block, the world's largest freestanding steel cell block. A visit to the Catholic Chapel and insight on the living quarters is also part of this tour. The Hollywood Tour shows the office of the warden in the Shawshank Redemption, the Parole Board Room and Andy Dufresne's escape tunnel. Hazard a trip into the sinister "hole." View the 1886 West Cell Block used as a Russian prison in Air Force One. This tour also involves extensive stair-climbing. The Behind

the Senses Tours ventures behind the scenes allowing access to areas not open to the general public.

There is also a view of the West Attic and where guides share stories of inmate punishment. Guides will also take the tour through "The Yard" where Andy and Red would sit and talk also from the Shawshank Redemption. Admission for all tours is five dollars per person plus an additional fee of nine dollars per adult or seven dollars per child, senior, college students and military veterans. These tours are full of history and interesting facts. You can still see props left behind after filming had finished. I encourage everyone to take a tour and see for you what an amazing experience it is.