

Penitentiary ideal and models of american prison



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Penitentiary ideal and models of American prison: The idea forming the bedrock of penitentiaries was to rehabilitate and reform the people who got incarcerated on grounds of severe criminal acts. According to the penitentiary ideals, the prisons should be more like rehabilitation centers for the prisoners than anything else so that they could be convinced in at least making an attempt to act normal enough to rejoin the society instead of treating them like animals in the way they are in most of the prisons presently. The goals of the penitentiary ideals were both modern and spiritual and differed from the more strict rules practiced at other prisons. They were based on rehabilitating an individual both emotionally and mentally which set in contrast with the physical punishments practiced in typical jails. The most important goal of the penitentiary was to develop habits of industry in an inmate convicted of felony by the enforcement of rules and practice of humane punishments.

There were two types of American prison models popular in the history named the Pennsylvania and Auburn models. What with the obscene cleaning conditions and inhuman punishments practiced in the Auburn prison model, both mind and body of a prisoner can get contaminated so that the chances of rejoining the society as a healthy individual plummet down for an incarcerated individual. Now, the Pennsylvania prison model introduced by the state of Pennsylvania almost from the start has been considered by the prison researchers to be closer to what could be called ideal as its " goals were toward the development of more humane procedures and practices dealing with criminals" (Experts column, 2012). The practical implementation of this idea stressed on keeping the prisoners separated from each other and treating them in isolation unlike the auburn system in which the jails are

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always overcrowded with every kind of inmates. It is claimed by Foster (2005) that good intentions underlined the formation of the Pennsylvania model which used Quaker reformatory imprisonment as a way of treating inmates. Quaker reformatory imprisonment focused on "isolation of inmates, fair treatment, and opportunity for work, reflection and reformation" (Foster, 2005). The benefits offered by this rehabilitative model in contrast to the Auburn model were that there was less chance for an inmate of getting severely physically harmed, there was no overcrowding, there was cleanliness, and efforts were made to reform the inmates mentally also. The disadvantages of the Auburn system are that more severe punishments with a higher need for the death penalty come with it. The inmates in the Auburn model driven jails were allowed no second chances, no attention was paid on cleanliness, the number of the prisoners went unchecked and they were not kept in isolation.

Pennsylvania prison model was considered to be the winning model as it stressed on developing such an environment that played an effective role in invoking regret and remorse in the hardcore inmates instead of hitting them repeatedly all day long which could only make them more stubborn and rigid in the end. This model was quite spiritual and way better than the Auburn prison model driven jails as it focused on creating a clean environment and practicing corrective behavior by trying more thoughtful strategies than the typical harsh punishments.

References:

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