There are few things more hopeful in the present aspect of the times than the multiplication and extension of Houses of Refuge and Reformation for children and youth.

V. Institutions for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents (1825–59)

Shortly before the first annual report of the New York House of Refuge had been completed, Henry Ware of Boston wrote to Professor John Griscom, requesting information “concerning the steps which have been taken in New York in relation to Juvenile Delinquency.” 1 Ware implored Griscom to forward the material as soon as possible; having to work out a plan “within a fortnight,” he needed it right away.

Boston’s Mayor Josiah Quincy, abreast of the latest trends in social welfare, also wrote to Professor Griscom. “Measures . . . relative to the attempt to restrain and reform juvenile offenders” were already contemplated in Boston and the mayor urged his New York friend to send on any information which might help to further the movement. 2 Quincy wanted to know all about the New York State laws regulating the care of juvenile delinquents. He wanted information on the source of the funds for the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents, the regulations drawn up for the new institution, its commitment process, the type of inmate taken in—whether “for crime or mere idleness”—how they were employed once entered, how instructed; any information which Griscom could supply would be of use.

Griscom immediately complied with Quincy’s requests. Quincy thanked Griscom for his cooperation and praised him for his efforts in behalf of misguided children. According to Quincy, the New York reformers had presented “a very honorable and stimulating example for us in this quarter to imitate; may we be excited by your success to similar laudable effort, in the cause of humanity!” 3

The Reverend Louis Dwight, the controversial spirit of the Boston
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Prison Discipline Society and its Executive Secretary, also passed on information concerning the new institution in New York. Buzzing back and forth from one northeastern city to another, Dwight served as a carrier of new ideas, particularly those of which he approved. The Boston Prison Discipline Society's new periodical (the first issue came out in 1824) also carried Dwight's enthusiasms. In addition to promoting the Refuge plan, Dwight served as the most ardent supporter of the Auburn "silent" system of congregate labor. In fact, he spent the majority of his time extolling Auburn's virtues. To Dwight, the Auburn system was the "best in the world." If one day it should fall, Dwight would be sure to follow.

Pennsylvanians, with their totally different system, grew restive under Dwight's inflated claims. Convinced of the superiority of their own system of solitary confinement, they rose to champion it. During the 1820's America had become a battleground between two warring schools of prison discipline—the pious Quakers of Philadelphia on one side and the equally pious parson from Massachusetts and his colleagues on the other. The House of Refuge reformers had not become embroiled in the controversy. Being on good terms with both belligerent camps, they kept their lines of communication open.

Before Dwight had fully launched his crusade for the Auburn system, he devoted a good deal of time to the many penal institutions in his territory. He wrote down the details of every visit and placed his accounts in the annual reports of the Boston Prison Discipline Society. Dwight consequently helped the various prison administrators to stay abreast of new techniques and movements. During this period of his life, he constituted a healthy check on numerous officials.

Dwight knew enough about the horrors of the Maryland Penitentiary to prescribe a House of Refuge for the city of Baltimore. He publicized the fact that little urchins, "one half of their heads shaved down to their scalps," were mingled indiscriminately with the villainous adults who made up the prison's major population. Dwight urged the people of Baltimore to follow the example of New York. Within the year, Dwight's suggestions came to at least partial fruition. A group of Baltimore citizens, meeting in the city's council chamber, set up a committee of five to investigate the feasibility of erecting a House of Refuge for their city. Three years went by and nothing had been con-
House of Refuge

structured. The Maryland legislature made a niggardly appropriation and the citizens had not been as generous as their northern brethren. Nevertheless, E. L. Finley, a prominent Baltimore philanthropist, worked out a set of plans. Together with an architect, he toured the other reformatories to gain ideas.

After urging Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore to follow the example of New York, Louis Dwight journeyed into the hinterland to spread the Refuge gospel. In 1829, Dwight entreated the people of Maine to follow their more populous neighbors. Because of "the efforts which are making for general improvement in Maine," Dwight was confident that the reformatory soon "would receive attention." The citizens of Maine, however, gave Dwight's recommendation a scant hearing. They needed all their energies to renovate the Maine State Prison. That underground cage of horrors required immediate attention; the children could wait. Not until the twin fevers of prohibition and abolition seized the Maine populace in a paroxysm of reforming zeal during the 1850's did they become sufficiently aroused to provide a separate institution for the care of juvenile delinquents.

Dwight also badgered the state of Connecticut for its tardiness. When the governor finally turned his attention to a revision of the state's criminal code in 1828, Dwight's hopes revived.

To Dwight, the New York House of Refuge served as the example for all the other juvenile institutions. He extolled the state of health of the inmates and the institution's remarkable record for successful rehabilitation. Of the 440 children indentured in its first four years, Dwight wrote that only 20 were "out of place" and had fallen short of the "fond expectations of their benefactors." 7

As for Massachusetts, Dwight urged the extension of the Refuge system throughout the state. Boston could have the "honor" of initiating the system. If New York and Pennsylvania were on the march, why not Massachusetts? Massachusetts legislators, however, viewed the Refuge system from a different perspective. It required almost twenty years and an anonymous gift of over $50,000 before they were ready to set up a state reformatory system for juveniles. Such reticence should have been a warning to Massachusetts reformers that efforts to establish and maintain Refuges for delinquent children might meet with a totally indifferent government.

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Early in 1826, Bostonians conducted their first major attack on the problem of delinquency. At South Boston, about two and one-half miles from the city, the Boston City Council established the Boston House of Reformation. Altering their earlier practice of sending youngsters to the state prison, the Massachusetts legislature gave the city council authority to send children to the new place. After selecting a board of seven directors and appropriating funds with which to run the place, the council appointed a superintendent to oversee it. The city council chose E. M. P. Wells, an Episcopal clergyman who had once been expelled from Brown University for refusing to inform on a fellow student, to serve as the institution's first superintendent. In selecting Wells, the members of the council had chosen an independent and capable man; one day they might come to regret their own foresight.

The Boston institution differed considerably from its New York counterpart. Supported almost entirely by the city council and governed by a politically appointed body, the Bostonians restricted their institution mainly to youths already convicted of crimes. In New York, the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents, a private corporation heavily assisted by New York State funds, took in both neglected and criminal children. Since they possessed no other facilities for the treatment of juveniles, the Manhattan group had to send abandoned and unfortunate children to the House of Refuge along with hardened young criminals. Boston, with its greater wealth of institutions, possessed more latitude.

On its opening day, the prospects of the Boston House of Reformation could not have been better. In the Reverend Wells, the Bostonians possessed a talented and energetic superintendent. Wells ran his institution without resort to the whip or the ball and chain. Like his New York colleague Joseph Curtis, Wells initiated a system of self-government among the inmates. His system, because he had built it with the totality of government in mind instead of exclusive concern for punishment, prospered, while Curtis' halfhearted attempt met with disaster.

Wells conceived of his charges as citizens in a tiny republic. Curtis, with his pietistic notions of good and evil, viewed the children as objects in a battle between Satan and God. Possessed with a religious zeal
to alter the lives of others, Curtis saw himself primarily as a redeeming figure stepping in to take away "the sins of the world." He seemed to feel that his own role resembled that of Christ. He would "suffer the little children" to come unto him. Once they came, Curtis would protect the young and untainted ones from the multitudes of sinners threatening to deprave their pure little hearts. First, the youngsters must be saved. After he had them firmly in hand, Curtis would proceed to inscribe their young lives with virtue. Certainly, Curtis concluded, once a child had been shown the proper way in which to live, that child would understand his duty and carry it out. Although Wells had no more training in child psychology than Curtis, the Bostonian went a step further. More optimistically inclined than Curtis, Wells saw the child as a rational being who might profit from experience. Unlike Curtis, who resorted to self-government as a desperate attempt to maintain order, Wells instituted inmate government because of its experience value. In operating as an entire society, the institution served the child as a laboratory. No artificial maxims, contrived by an adult mind, seemed to intrude. Instead, the range of problems confronting the wise parent came before the boy himself. If a boy were naughty, what punishment did he merit? If a boy were good, what reward should he receive? The House of Reformation youngsters kept their own conduct book and meted out sentences to evil-doers. On occasion, the sentences became so harsh that Wells had to step in to modify them. The Wells approach seemed an extremely fit one for youngsters training for democratic citizenship. The boys, with the subtle guiding hand of their superintendent, were making decisions, which later on, as participants in a democratic society, they would have to make as adult citizens.

Reflecting the predominant intellectual and social thought of the period, Wells optimistically placed most of his emphasis on positive behavior. With a system of graded conduct, Wells hoped to show the inmates the rewards of being good. For the worthy, a series of "Bon Grades"; for the unworthy, a system of "Mal Grades." New York also had its system of graded behavior descriptions. The major difference was that Wells tended to stress the positive aspects and the New York superintendent often resorted to a pejorative type of negativism.

The Wells system was, in a sense, a manifestation of Wells's person-
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ality as well as a reflection of the dominant theme of the times. As he lived in an atmosphere of optimism and believed in progress by rational means, Wells mirrored the age. While the Owenites sought to carve out their utopian community in the wilderness of New Harmony, Indiana, Wells sought to make a utopian community out of little thieves from the streets of Boston.

True to his own past history, Wells forbade the boys to inform on one another. By comparison to the New York superintendents, Wells held up a Grecian standard of education. He stressed physical and academic training, trying to keep the boys playing out of doors or at their books as much as possible. His day’s schedule allowed for five and one-half hours of labor. The administrator of the New York House of Refuge, by contrast, scheduled at least seven and one-half hours of labor—and usually eight.

Gustave De Beaumont and Alexis De Tocqueville, two young French prison commissioners who were visiting the institution, felt that the hours of recreation and education were vital ones, indeed. While Wells romped with the youngsters, “their bodies grew stronger.” According to De Beaumont and De Tocqueville, moral fibers strengthened as well. While this “superior man was one with them, he developed a power which no other could duplicate or surpass.”

By 1831, nearly five years after its opening, the directors could boast of a very high rate of successful reformation. Of the three hundred youngsters released from their care, only fourteen were definitely “known to be bad.” The badness, in these cases, meant that they had again been apprehended by the authorities and convicted of crimes.

In order to convince others of the utility of his institution, Wells saw to it that his most likely prospects got an opportunity to perform before the public. During good weather, Wells often showed off his brightest youngsters to a select audience of interested citizens.

The only flaw in Wells’s system was Wells. Its success depended totally on him. Because he was an exceptional man, he got unusual results. De Beaumont and De Tocqueville thought his approach the “most original and daring plan of reform” they had yet seen, but they feared that it depended solely on Wells; other attempts to imitate it might easily fail.

The New York House of Refuge, however, once Superintendent
House of Refuge

Nathaniel C. Hart stepped in to relieve the floundering Curtis, perfected an impersonal regime. Hart was a systematizer by nature. When Hart retired after ten years of efficient and orderly administration, David Terry, Jr., stepped into his position without any noticeable disruption. Far less talented personally than Wells, Hart and his successors subordinated imagination to system and got consistent results.

The Reverend Louis Dwight, fully as ardent in praise as he could be devastating in condemnation, specifically lauded the administration of Wells. Instead of a grim prison, the Boston superintendent, in Dwight’s eyes, ran a superb “school for reformation.” Wells, with his classification system, rewarded those who deserved to be rewarded. Boys classified as “First Bon Grade,” Dwight observed, could “walk abroad without a monitor.” During certain hours, they could even sail or swim. Such a positive program, Dwight hinted, could only bring out the best traits. Superintendent Hart of New York defined his best class of children as those “who never swear, never lie, never make use of obscene or indecorous expressions, and who are [or appear to be], equally zealous in the school and in the workshop.” In contrast to Hart, Superintendent Wells defined his first group as “those who make positive, regular, and constant efforts toward being good.” Even Wells’s terminology, although considerably more vague, seemed to have a more positive ring. Dwight congratulated the Boston City Council for their support of Wells, but added a warning note which Joseph Curtis would have surely recognized. The inmates, creatures of “parental neglect and indulgence” that they were, needed constant surveillance. He recalled the frequent escapes of the early days of the institution and urged Wells to keep “increasing vigilance.”

Although Dwight’s note of caution was sound, he made a mistake in describing wayward children as possible adversaries. Instead, Dwight should have warned Wells of the restive city council. Ever since the young preacher had first assumed command of the Boston House of Reformation, the councilmen had observed his actions with baleful eyes. They had never really approved of the man, and his program also upset their notions of propriety. At first, they had tolerated both, but by 1832, they finally decided to criticize him publicly.

Primarily, the officials picked at Wells because of his stress on academic studies. To what purpose could these boys put all this learning?
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Youngsters of this sort, the council felt, would be far better off learning skills and habits of industry. Furthermore, the children had not yet demonstrated that they could earn their keep. Wells expended too much effort on “recreation and show,” the council stated, and not enough on “systematic and productive labor.” The boys seemed entirely too full of animal spirits, the city officials declared; youngsters in a public reform school ought to be much more submissive and docile. Beyond their criticism of the treatment program of Wells, the councilmen had more pragmatic grounds for complaint. They felt that the program ought to pay for itself and that only a zealous attempt to inculcate work habits could satisfy both financial and moral considerations. Also, the managers no doubt resented Wells’s actions. Like many another reformer, he felt that he knew what was appropriate for society. He also did a poor job of covering up his disdain for the councilmen and public officials in general. When they attacked his program, Wells resigned in protest. He would not allow them to tamper with his design. Before he left, however, Wells issued a vigorous defense of himself and his scheme of reformation. Soon after, as if to show his sincerity, he set up his own private school for “the moral discipline of boys.” Wells also shifted his energies into a wider spectrum of additional reforms. One of the first vice-presidents of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Wells, on the grounds that slavery promoted licentiousness among the young white men of the South, early advocated its elimination.

The Boston public reform school movement, however, had suffered the loss of a vigorous and progressive young leader. Wells, whom the young French commissioners, De Beaumont and De Tocqueville, regarded as the outstanding reformatory administrator in the United States, had received a public rebuke and had been forced to flee into the fold of private philanthropy. After his departure, Boston’s venture in the field of public reform schools withered and very nearly died.

The farm school idea, once suggested by W. H. Prescott, one of the managers of the Boston Asylum for Indigent Boys, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, at the time a member of the Boston Public School Committee, proved more persistent than Wells’s reformatory plan. In 1832, six years after the House of Reformation at South Boston had opened and ten years after Prescott’s initial suggestion, a number of interested
philanthropists met at the Tremont Bank to reexamine the possibility of setting up a farm school. These men were dissatisfied with the current facilities for educating Boston boys,

... who, from extraordinary exposure to moral evil, require peculiar provision for the forming of their character, and for promoting and securing the usefulness and happiness of their lives; and who have not yet fallen into those crimes which require interposition of the law to punish or restrain them.  

The reformers, disenchanted with the direction which the House of Reformation was taking, expressed their desire for a wholly new institution.

His frail frame quivering with eagerness, the Reverend Joseph Tuckerman, long a leading figure among Boston’s benevolent men and women, proposed that they immediately create a farm school for potentially delinquent boys. Day by day, Tuckerman stated, Boston’s slums eroded the souls of these unfortunate youngsters. The farm school, he insisted, might change all this. Tuckerman’s associates, including men such as W. H. Prescott; merchant John Tappan, brother of the New York abolitionists, Arthur and Lewis, and an ardent temperance crusader in his own right; Deacon Moses Grant, later president of Boston’s Society for the Prevention of Pauperism; Professor George Ticknor, one of Harvard’s leading minds and a correspondent of John Griscom; and the Reverend E. M. P. Wells, on his way out as chief administrator of the Boston House of Reformation, all concurred with the suggestion. Designating themselves as the Boston Farm School Society, the little group envisioned a program similar to the Refuge discipline. They wanted to give the boys a thorough instruction in “moral and religious duties, and in the elementary knowledge usually communicated in our common town schools,” with a program of “suitable” labor.

Enthusiastic with its prospects, the society laid the plan before the public. They drove for an initial goal of $50,000 and a supplementary working fund of $3,000 for anticipated annual expenditures. The project met with community approval, the public donating over $22,000 within a few short months. Encouraged by this response, the managers purchased Thompson’s Island in Boston Harbor for $6,000
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and started to build immediately. They even managed to get the school started by the summer of 1833, but as winter approached, they abandoned the school until the buildings could be secured against the bitter wind blowing in from the ocean.

The spring of 1834 brought with it a time for further decision. The farm school group, its funds nearly exhausted by the projects of the previous year, and with an expensive new plant just completed, needed more money. Hesitating to appeal to the public again, the managers looked around for some means with which to finance the school. They finally settled on a liaison with the Boston Asylum for Indigent Boys. How could they make their appeal to the older and more established group?

To the managers of the Boys' Asylum, encumbered with a crumbling plant located in the midst of the crowded city, the suggestion of moving into a newly constructed edifice at a secluded spot appeared as a heaven-sent solution. The members who possessed interests in both organizations pushed for the merger. In May, 1834, the two groups held their first joint meeting and in the next year the Massachusetts legislature granted a charter to the newly formed unit. Reconstituted with the formidable title, the "Boston Asylum and Farm School for Indigent Boys," the managers completed the union by transferring the inmates of the old institution to Thompson's Island in June, 1835. The marriage of convenience thus consummated, the new institution immediately prospered.

Instead of three institutions for the treatment of juvenile delinquents or potential delinquents, Boston now settled on two. Within a few years, however, they were back to three. City officials established another school for potential delinquents, the Boylston School, and housed it in the vicinity of the House of Reformation.

New York, with a much larger population, only had one. Did Boston possess any advantage from its abundance? Perhaps Massachusetts men felt that their city needed entirely different places for actual and potential delinquents. For the curious and the skeptical, Henry Rogers, a partisan of the farm school idea, sketched what he considered to be the separate functions of the different institutions. Rogers regarded the House of Reformation at South Boston as a public penitentiary, "established by municipal authority, and intended for the punishment and
reformation of criminals." Under Massachusetts law, a youngster could be admitted to the House of Reformation only after he had been openly charged by a parent or some “other prosecutor” with the violation of the law, tried before the court, convicted, and sentenced. Rogers’ interpretation illustrated the degree to which the original Refuge notion had altered since the time of Superintendent Wells. The farm school, remarked Rogers, possessed no direct relation to municipal officials. It existed as a strictly “private corporation,” functioning in a “preventive” capacity. It acted in relation “to those who receive its benefits in loco parentis.” These were exactly the same words used earlier by Professor John Griscom in describing the proposed New York House of Refuge, but the auspices of the farm school was private instead of quasi-public.

The appeal of this line of reasoning, although it lost its force when new legislative enactments opened the doors of the House of Reformation to neglected as well as to criminal children, wielded a powerful influence over Boston’s idealistic reformers. The reformers were attracted to the notion of early detection. Why spend a tremendous amount of money on cure when a few coins expended on prevention might do the trick? True to their heritage of Yankee thrift, a good many Boston philanthropists looked upon reform schools and asylums as a means of lowering the relief roles.

Because of the appeal of the farm school program and the loss of appeal of the House of Reformation since the end of the Wells administration, many reformers lost interest in the South Boston institution. From the date of the founding of the farm school and the dismissal of Wells, the House of Reformation ceased to be a bold experiment and commenced a long and dismal career as a routinely administered city penitentiary for youthful offenders.

In July, 1841, the House of Reformation became a part of the Boston House of Industry, occupying a building jointly with the Boylston School. The Boylston School, described in 1842 by Charles Dickens as “an asylum for neglected and indigent boys who have committed no crime, but who, in the ordinary course of things, would very soon be purged of that distinction,” outshone the House of Reformation.

By the spring of 1842, the number of inmates in the House of Reformation dropped to thirty-six and remained at about this level for
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a number of years. Following an unimaginative program, the boys spent most of their time manufacturing palm leaf fans and tarpaulin hats. Noting the sparseness of the reformatory's population and the hordes of little hooligans thronging the city's streets, the city's official inspectors called the council's attention to the numbers of delinquents who could still be accommodated. The city officials, however, made no comment. Perhaps they felt the delinquents were better off in the streets.

Occasionally, a perceptive inspector observed the "pallid" appearance of the children and recommended a greater exposure to fresh air. More often, visitors noticed the grimness of it all. It was at this stage of the institution's career that Charles Dickens came to visit Boston. Viewing the House of Reformation at the same time as he visited the Boylston School, Dickens distinctly preferred the Boylston School. "A more chubby-looking, full-waist-coated set of boys" Dickens had never seen. The inmates of the House of Reformation, by contrast, struck him as a far less promising group. He saw the boys at work and at school, where they sang a song about liberty, "an odd, and one would think, rather aggravating theme for prisoners." 23

In 1858, sixteen years after Dickens' visit, the House of Reformation underwent a slight renascence. The city officials moved the establishment to the recently constructed, but vacant, almshouse for foreign poor on Deer Island. Since the state of Massachusetts had taken the burden for supporting immigrant paupers from Boston's shoulders, the city council could fill the Deer Island structure with inmates from the House of Reformation. On July 1, they completed the move and the inspectors seemed much more satisfied with the new accommodations. At the end of the year, the superintendent listed a total of 190 boys present.

Although the official report of the institution glowed with good prospects, the public officials who managed it showed little imagination. When the portion of the building occupied by juvenile delinquents on Deer Island burned, philanthropists hoped for the construction of a new building separate from the other groups. Instead, they learned "with regret" that the city officials had decided to add another story to the existing structure. This meant that the House of Reformation for Juvenile Offenders, the Boylston School for Children
of Tender Years, and "persons sentenced by the Police Court, common street-walkers, drunkards, vagabonds, and others for whom a work­house is the proper place" were all herded together under one roof.25 Even though they were in separate parts of the building, mutual taint seemed unavoidable.

Thus, in the generation of its formation and growth, the Boston House of Reformation had traversed the full scale. Founded originally to remove juvenile delinquents from unhealthy associations, the institution finally ended up on an island filled with outcasts. Shortsighted public policy, duplication of effort, and lack of imagination combined to defeat a potentially worthwhile program.

While Professor Griscom and Mayor Quincy labored to construct reformatories in New York and Boston, Philadelphia reformers grappled with problems of their own. They needed no warnings from other cities to make them aware of the need for a House of Refuge. By the early 1820's, members of the Philadelphia Society for the Alleviating of the Miseries of Public Prisons had already stirred themselves up over the presence of youthful apprentices in their jails. Finding a boy who had been thrown in jail because of supposed disobedience to his mas­ter, the Visiting Committee of the Society investigated and discovered that the youngster had been illegally committed. They also found out that the boy's master had beaten him with a "leather trace to the end of which was an iron ring or buckle."26 Their sense of justice and hu­manity violated, the committee members immediately applied to Judge Duncan for a writ of habeas corpus. The judge released the boy shortly afterwards. On October 3, 1823, the society became sufficiently aroused to investigate the cause of the potential delinquent. At a meeting of the acting committee, they formed a subcommittee "to confer with the guardians of the poor on the best means of putting a stop to commit­ments of young children as vagrants."27

Informal connections existed between New York and Philadelphia's Houses of Refuge. The two leading lights of New York's Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, John Griscom and Thomas Eddy, both native Pennsylvanians and members of the Society of Friends, could easily have sown the seeds. They carried on a voluminous correspondence with friends and relatives in Philadelphia and often visited the city.

The similarity of the two institutions became even more pro-
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ounced due to the migration of two important people to the Quaker City. Late in 1828, Isaac Collins, one of the founders of the New York House of Refuge, moved to Philadelphia. Bringing rich experience in both internal management and legislative lobbying, Collins served as an important high-level link between the two groups. Within a year after he moved to Philadelphia, Collins joined the managers of the Philadelphia House of Refuge and remained active for the remainder of his long and useful life.28 Connections within the internal management of the two houses were further cemented with the arrival of Miss Catherine Gowey, formerly Matron of the New York House of Refuge. In the Summer of 1829, she resigned her position in New York and became Matron of the newly opened reformatory in Philadelphia.29

The Philadelphia House of Refuge, however, was not an exact replica of the New York institution. Much of its similarity to the earlier establishment came about because Philadelphians, like their northeastern colleagues, looked to a common source for ideas. England provided the model reformatory. During the Acting Committee meetings early in 1823, members of the Philadelphia Society had thoroughly reviewed the Fourth Annual Report of the London Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and for the Reformatio of Juvenile Offenders.30 Before they went ahead on their own, the managers also examined an abstract of a British Parliamentary Act of July 10, 1823. The abstract contained a great deal of information on the treatment accorded juvenile offenders in England. The Philadelphia group also regularly corresponded with many of the same Englishmen whom Professor Griscom had earlier consulted. Thomas F. Buxton, Peter Bedford, Samuel Hoare, Jr., and William Roscoe were all corresponding members of the Philadelphia association.

Despite external similarities, the two Refuges did not evolve in the same way. The two groups differed chiefly on the matter of financial optimism. While the New Yorkers went ahead with a two-pronged attack on the New York public and legislators, the Philadelphians hung back momentarily. They knew they did not have the finances themselves and hesitated to ask either the public officials or the public itself for any more money, particularly since the grandiose Eastern Penitentiary, the most expensive in America, was still in the process of being built. Finally, at the instigation of a little group of militant
Quaker women led by Mary Wistar and Anna Potts, the reticent Philadelphians decided to make a public appeal. Their own delay and the decision to erect a more elaborate building than the makeshift one into which the New York group moved meant postponement of the opening until December 1, 1828. When they finally did open their doors, however, Philadelphians could boast of having the most imposing Refuge as well as the most elaborate adult prison, in America.

After the first wave of reformation along the eastern seaboard, a number of years passed before the movement went beyond the Alleghenies. The new House of Refuge built in Rochester, New York, in 1849, and the erection of a new state reformatory for boys in Westborough, Massachusetts, during the same period set off a new phase in the movement to rehabilitate juveniles. The founders of the new institutions wished to differentiate themselves from the older establishments and remarked that the new approach differed “in sundry essential features” from the earlier Refuges. The new founders hoped to establish a new grade of corrective influences applicable especially to juvenile offenders. Eager to rid themselves of the prison aura which had been assigned to the Refuge image, the Massachusetts reformers wanted their new institution, which had been urged into being by an initial bequest of $50,000 from Theodore Lyman, to be called a “school for juvenile reform.” The new terminology suggested a symbolic shift away from the Refuge idea toward the emerging dream of a common school education for all. The school for reform, however, was to be surrounded by a “high wall.”

In 1849, Baltimore finally ranked itself alongside the other cities by announcing its intention to build a new House of Refuge. To the initial list of three cities, plus the subsequent addition of Rochester and Baltimore, the names of Pittsburgh and Cincinnati rounded out the roster of cities and states with public juvenile institutions. New Orleans, which had lost its first building (built in 1847) in a fire in 1849, brought the number to eight at mid-century. Other cities soon followed.

F. A. Packard, editor of the Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy, exulted over the spread of the Refuge system. The fact that it had been set up as far away as New Orleans and Cincinnati, the
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“queen city” of the west, overjoyed him. He hoped that all the cities and large towns would see the wisdom and economy of providing a similar agency to check the career of juvenile offenders, and “save them from a felon’s doom.” The new Cincinnati institution, according to its promoters, had been designed with an eye to greater differentiation in treatment than was possible in the older Refuge. The Cincinnati group intended to maintain two distinct establishments within the premises, under the same supervision. Initially, they planned a “House of Correction” for the “confinement of males over sixteen and females over fourteen and a House of Refuge for the confinement and reform of males and females under those ages.”

In spite of the fact that knowledgeable people in the field, such as Packard and the various Refuge officials, deplored the fact that too wide an age span existed in their institutions and too little classification went on, the reform school movement appeared to be gathering force. F. A. Packard, writing in the leading journal of prison reform, announced that “in no previous period (in the history of the world we presume) has there been such wide and deep solicitude respecting the moral condition and prospects of children and youths as at present.”

The public, declared Packard, had finally awakened to the presence of the “giant evil" of delinquency. The Board of Managers of the Philadelphia House of Refuge had sponsored a prize essay contest on the subject of juvenile delinquency and had been deluged with high-quality manuscripts. Packard felt that there were “few things more helpful” in the new trends than “the multiplication and extension” of the Refuge system. In June, 1852, the New Hampshire State Legislature passed a bill calling for the establishment of a new state reform school to be located in Concord.

Eighteen fifty-four marked a peak construction year in the Refuge system. Along with the physical plants being erected in a large number of cities and states with refuges and reform schools, the older institutions in New York and Philadelphia experienced a building rejuvenation. At the occasion of the opening of the new Philadelphia edifice, Packard remarked that the new building was a good sign; it testified that reform schools would continue to be multiplied, improved, and extended until finally the tide of crime and pauperism might be met effectively. When commenting on the prize essays on delinquency,
House of Refuge

Packard concluded that "If we were asked, what one subject within the range of a philanthropic eye is, at this moment, exciting the deepest interest, we should not hesitate to say, the improvement of the condition of children and youth." The chief flaw in the Refuge system, according to Packard, was that it was "strictly preventive." It could "arrest the progress of a malady," but something else should be devised, he felt, which would help to eliminate the seeds of disease. At this point, he could envision only two possible major solutions: more education and industrial employment. Also, if communities empowered agencies to intervene in potentially damaging situations by providing more institutions such as the newly founded New York Juvenile Asylum, which had been designed wholly as an establishment for neglect cases and a younger age group, Packard could predict some success. The creation of the New York Juvenile Asylum, which had been incorporated in 1851, suggested a new phase in the Refuge movement. Since it was founded to receive neglected children and to serve as their guardian, the Asylum effectively removed a long-standing population from the Refuge ranks. From this point on, only convicted juvenile delinquents would be sent to the New York House of Refuge. Neglect cases would be housed in the new asylum.

When the new Refuge home officially opened on Randall's Island on November 24, 1854, the Refuge movement appeared to have marked another transition in its career. It retained the name which its founders gave it, but the movement which had brought in the Refuge system, with its omnibus characteristics, had long since declined. In Massachusetts and elsewhere, juvenile institutions had become diversified and the general character of juvenile reform had altered. Even the terminology of Refuge had become outdated; the new term, "the reform school," suggested the education and training facet which had been evolving gradually. The Refuge movement, which had originally alerted the public to the need for separate juvenile establishments, was over; the reform school movement of the late 1840's had come along to replace it.

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