

presumably including many adults with children, overrepresented among outdoor relief recipients in the cases he studied. Blacks received 20% of the relief while constituting 4.8% of the state's population. Warfield remained undisturbed that African Americans received relief payments lower than those made to other recipients, an imbalance he attributed to "a recognition of the very much lower standard of living which prevails among Negroes as a class. The Negroes also have the proverbial ability to 'get along somehow.'"⁶²

A 1922 study of thirty-five Missouri counties found similar overrepresentation in outdoor relief payments. Blacks were 5.2% of the state population and received 18.8% of outdoor relief. At the same time, county almshouses contained a lower aggregate percentage of blacks than whites, perhaps due to difficulties in maintaining segregated quarters in these rundown institutions.⁶³

Inequities between rural and urban areas also persisted. The chasm was particularly noticeable in Missouri, a predominantly rural state with two of the nation's largest cities on its eastern and western borders. In 1918, the second Children's Code Commission found that care and services available to rural Missouri families lagged behind those available in the cities. More than half the state's counties were entirely rural and sixty-five percent of Missouri children lived in rural districts, but the commissioners found that "little or no attention has been given to child welfare work in country communities." "How long," the commissioners asked rhetorically, "will the people in the rural districts permit their children to suffer these injustices?"⁶⁴

When the 1919 White House Conference concluded that "[w]ork for children needing special care has been neglected in rural parts of the country," the delegates acknowledged a truism known by child advocates. When President Herbert Hoover's 1930 White House Conference on Child Health and Protection convened during the Depression and pledged to seek for "every rural child as satisfactory schooling and health services as for the city child," it stated an aspiration still unachieved. In 1930, a Yale Medical School professor called the nation's rural health care "pitiably inadequate" and found no more than a dozen rural counties with "health machinery such as exists in every large city."⁶⁵

A number of private organizations made a positive difference in Missouri. The Missouri Children's Home Society received and placed children in family homes statewide. Organized in 1891 and probably the state's first child-placing agency, the Society named a state superintendent and divided the state into five districts, each managed by a district superintendent. With headquarters in St. Louis, the Society had 500 local advisory boards throughout the state which helped find destitute children, passed on applications from prospective foster parents, and supervised white and black children who were placed out. The Society's receiving home for temporary care of

destitute children had a capacity of seventy-five. In 1910, the Society had 792 children under its care and supervision and made 178 placements.⁶⁶

Beginning in 1901, Boone County welfare services were managed by the Charity Organization Society, renamed the Public Welfare Society in 1923. On the whole, however, services for Missouri's delinquent and dependent children remained much more available in the cities, with sustained networks of private relief organizations nonexistent in most rural areas. Juvenile courts in smaller counties often institutionalized children for lack of alternative placements.

The St. Louis City juvenile court could rely on a sophisticated care system with thirty-two private sectarian and non-sectarian orphanages and other organizations supported by endowments, private contributions, payments from parents of assisted children, and city funding. By the 1920s, the organizations housed about 3,500 children, and most facilities were full or beyond capacity.⁶⁷

The St. Louis Children's Aid Society

St. Louis relief efforts were led by the private St. Louis Children's Aid Society and the public Board of Children's Guardians. Created in 1909 and incorporated in 1911, the Society initially reached out to delinquent and dependent children needing institutions, foster care and assistance in their own homes. After 1923, the Society worked primarily with children needing foster care or sometimes adoptive homes, while the Board worked primarily with families needing mothers' allowances in their own homes.⁶⁸

The Society operated without public funds, relying instead on contributions from religious organizations, clubs and private individuals and reimbursement from relatives of about 80% of the children it assisted. In 1928, the Child Welfare League of America praised the Society for commendable work, high standards and careful placement of children needing foster care. At the CWLA's recommendation, a separate division of the Society opened in St. Louis County in 1931.⁶⁹

A 1927 U.S. Children's Bureau study reported that the Society received boys under sixteen and girls under twenty-one "with no limitations as to sex, religion, race or nationality," but the public Board actually worked with most needy black children. Many of the black and white children were placed by their parents for temporary care, and others were committed by the juvenile court. The Society's home-finding department screened prospective foster parents, usually managed to place siblings together, and tried to place no more than two or three children at a time in a particular foster home. The Society would make

foster placements only when efforts to keep the child at home failed, and only after investigation indicated that placement would be in the best interests of the child, the family and the community. Once a placement was made, infants were visited by a nurse at least every two weeks, while preschool and school children were visited every six weeks. The Society specialized in foster care for infants and children with health and behavior challenges, and had a health care arrangement with the Washington University Dispensary and the city's Children's Hospital. The two providers offered their services free, except to children whose parents could afford to pay a fee.⁷⁰

The St. Louis Board of Children's Guardians

The Board of Children's Guardians, which the General Assembly authorized the city to establish by ordinance in 1911, began operating late that year on the principle that all dependent children fit for home life should have one, preferably in their own homes. Mothers' allowances were paid from funds appropriated by the city council, and mothers receiving support to care for their own children sometimes received further allowances by also boarding other children.⁷¹

The Board had full authority to determine eligibility and make awards under the city's mothers' allowance program, though it worked closely with the juvenile court. All dependent children were supervised by a department headed by a woman with social work training who was a member of the state Bar. Most recipients were initially referred to the Board by private agencies, notably the St. Louis Provident Association, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Lutheran Society and the Jewish Family and Children's Services.⁷²

The Board visited each recipient mother at home once a month, scrutinized her written expense account when she came by the city treasurer's office in city hall for payment every two weeks, and offered advice about family income management. Mothers were expected to earn as much as possible to support the family by working in or out of the home, though night work was not permitted.⁷³

Foster Care

If a delinquent or dependent child could not remain at home even with public or private assistance, the least restrictive alternative often meant foster care, that is, temporary care in the home of a relative or another family. Foster care was designed to provide a home-like substitute for congregate

institutions. In the nineteenth century, such substitute care was usually arranged privately, with or without an apprenticeship agreement. The early years of the twentieth century saw the beginning of sustained state-operated foster care systems available to the juvenile court for delinquent and dependent children unable to remain safely in their own homes.

A few Missouri localities did not wait for state action. In some delinquency and dependency cases, for example, the Jackson County juvenile court would place the child in a family home after a probation officer had taken a request from a couple who wanted to board a child, and had investigated the home and checked the couple's references. The probation office preferred middle-aged churchgoing couples who owned homes near the school the child would attend. No more than three children were boarded together unless they were siblings, and every effort was made to keep siblings together. If the children were over three, only children of the same sex were boarded together. The court paid boarding parents a weekly stipend of \$4.50 for the first child and \$4.00 for each additional child, with clothing paid for by private relief agencies.⁷⁴

Missouri enacted foster care legislation in 1913 and 1921. In addition to extending foster care to delinquency cases, the 1921 legislation demonstrated the state's growing involvement in child welfare by authorizing the State Board of Charities and Corrections to license, inspect and supervise all foster homes. The license requirement also extended to child caring institutions, boarding homes (except ones operated by religious orders, or state or local authorities), child placing agencies and maternity homes and hospitals. The 1921 legislation authorized the board to determine what records these persons and entities must keep, to require periodic reports from them, and to revoke licenses of persons and entities failing to comply with the board's regulations. The board granted most license applications, but denied at least two for substandard conditions, one in Kansas City and another in Jefferson City.⁷⁵

By the early 1920s, a few hundred thousand children were in foster care nationwide, an apparently large number that still did not account for all needy children. Foster placements worked best when the state recruited qualified foster parents after a careful selection process, paid them reasonable monthly stipends, and carefully supervised the children's health, nutrition and care during the placement. All this, however, cost money which often was not forthcoming. "[W]hen an agency tries to obtain for each child in care a reasonably normal home environment," a child protection official lamented about the national situation in 1924, "it enters upon an outlay of funds which the general public is quite unprepared to meet." When President Hoover's 1930 White House Conference pledged to secure for a

“child who must receive foster care, the nearest substitute for his own home,” the attendees tacitly acknowledged that many children still languished in institutions.⁷⁶

Despite their freedom from fault, some dependent children were still being committed to the Boonville and Chillicothe reformatories and other correctional institutions for lack of available alternative placements. The state had relatively few formal foster placements because appropriations, though not far out of line on a national scale, impeded efforts to recruit and maintain foster parents. In 1927, the Child Welfare League of America found that St. Louis foster parents were generally “thrifty, laboring class people who think they can add a child or two to their own brood at little cost and get a regular income out of it.” In a study of eighteen metropolitan areas in various parts of the nation, average monthly foster care stipends in December of 1930 were \$19.70 per child. Public and private agencies in St. Louis boarded 970 children and paid an average of \$15.34 per child; public and private agencies in Jackson County boarded 216 children and paid an average of \$18.48 per child.⁷⁷

With state and local budgets strapped in 1933, the state Children’s Bureau supervised 420 children in foster care in 90 counties, mostly on farms and in small communities. Counties south of the Missouri River, especially in the Ozarks, had only a few foster children each. Nearly 40% of foster children were in the twelve counties closest to the Bureau’s Carrollton headquarters. The counties closest to St. Louis, Kansas City and Springfield were primarily serviced by agencies in those cities. The number of children in state foster care would remain small during the Depression, not overtaking the population in orphanages and other institutions until the post war years.⁷⁸

As Missouri began to stress foster care, the children’s code commissions between 1915 and 1921 pinpointed the lack of sufficient public facilities for dependent children awaiting foster placements. The General Assembly passed legislation creating a temporary state facility, but the Governor vetoed the bill as too costly.⁷⁹

Then in 1921, the legislature created the State Home for Children in Carrollton as a temporary placement for abandoned, neglected or maltreated children under seventeen committed by juvenile courts to state guardianship pending foster placement, return to parents or relatives, or adoption. On a short-term basis, the state home would provide food, clothing and shelter; preventive and corrective health care; and moral and physical instruction and training in the industrial arts.⁸⁰

Juvenile courts made assignments to the Carrollton home, which was supervised by the state Children’s Bureau until 1933 and then by the Board of Managers of State Eleemosynary Institutions. Each county had a quota of chil-

dren it could place in the home, depending on the number of children in the county and its population. Whenever the home was filled to capacity, preference was given to younger children and the neediest. From the outset, the home was particularly important to rural counties, which had almost no public facilities of their own to care for dependent children.⁸¹

In 1934, one researcher asserted that the Carrollton home was used for permanent care more often than its charter implied, and that state efforts to place the home's children for adoption often failed. She concluded that the state conducted follow-up visits only annually or semiannually, too infrequently to provide permanency for the children living there. In 1939, Governor Lloyd C. Stark's Children's Code Commission praised the Carrollton home for "admirable work," but cautioned that its capacity of less than one hundred children was "totally insufficient" to serve all dependent children needing temporary care. The Commission recommended better state and local funding for foster homes in the children's own communities because such arrangements provide "love, security, proper training and individual understanding."⁸²

In 1941, Carrollton was closed as a receiving home for neglected and dependent children, largely because juvenile courts and state agencies began stressing that fewer children needed state guardianship, and that guardianship was best accomplished in the child's own community where he or she could better maintain ties with family and friends. The state had also found that local foster care cost less than maintaining the Carrollton home. Thanks primarily to these changed attitudes, the number of children in state guardianship decreased from 438 in 1941 to only 112 in 1950. Another researcher found distinct improvements in the state's efforts to find permanent homes for abandoned and neglected children who had become wards of the state by juvenile court order.⁸³

Institutional Care

In delinquency and dependency cases alike, the most restrictive alternative was institutional placement, which deprived the child of personal liberty and a family-like setting for some period of time. The nineteenth century left competing legacies. Delinquent and dependent children were institutionalized in large numbers, but the General Assembly periodically sought to spare children the harshest institutional confinements. For most of these children, county prisons and the state penitentiary eventually yielded to the state and local reformatories, houses of refuge, and houses of detention. Almshouses yielded to children's asylums and foundling hospitals. By the end of the century, legislation

and private philanthropy had removed most delinquent and dependent Missouri children from the harshest state institutions. Most children, but not yet all.

Prisons

Even before creating the St. Louis City juvenile court in 1903, the General Assembly recognized the need to incarcerate convicted children separate from adults. Legislation in 1895 had prohibited commitment of any boy under eighteen to the county jail or state penitentiary. Instead, boys thereafter convicted of felonies or misdemeanors were to be committed to the newly created Boonville reformatory for terms of not less than two years and not beyond their twenty-first birthday.⁸⁴

The lawmakers felt so strongly about separating children from adult convicts that the 1895 legislation granted the Governor authority to commute the sentence of any boy under twenty-one then in the penitentiary so he could be transferred to Boonville for the prescribed term. The legislation also commanded the reformatory to classify boys within its walls, separating “the younger and less vicious from those who may be older or more hardened in crime.”⁸⁵

In 1895, Governor William J. Stone reported that the penitentiary still confined 323 boys under twenty, including many seventeen, sixteen or even younger serving long sentences. He called the practice “almost inhuman, and a disgrace to our civilization.” He reported that some circuit judges had “quite a common practice” of sentencing these younger boys to the penitentiary, leaving it to the governor to commute their sentences and send them to Boonville when and if their true ages were determined. The Governor identified a financial motive grounded in state law: “If the trial judge in the first instance orders the confinement of boys at [Boonville], they are sent there at the expense of the county of their residence; but if they are sent to the penitentiary and the Governor commutes the sentence, then they go to [Boonville] at the expense of the State.”⁸⁶

The juvenile court acts extended the mandate forbidding incarceration of children with dangerous adults. Investigations in the 1920s found the mandate sometimes ignored, usually when juvenile detention facilities were lacking or when a particular juvenile was deemed too dangerous to be placed with others the same age.

Imprisoned children lived in deplorable conditions. Between 1897 and 1910, the State Board of Charities and Corrections found Missouri’s prisons and almshouses filthy, with all ages, both sexes and the insane often mixed together. In 1912, the board found that most Missouri counties still maintained “old-

fashioned jails, dark and unsanitary, vermin-laden and disinfectant soaked, and impossible properly to administer." In 1913 and 1914, the board inspected forty Missouri jails and found some improvements. Women, children and the insane were receiving better care, but the board still found the situation serious because of overcrowding and failure to classify prisoners according to the seriousness of their offenses. In one county jail, the board found eighteen persons, including six boys under eighteen, in three cells.⁸⁷

In 1916, the board found that 271 children under sixteen were imprisoned in the state's jails, half of whom were released without conviction or sentence, sometimes after confinement for as long as six months. The first Children's Code Commission found more than five hundred children under eighteen in jails "associating with criminals and tramps." The Commission also reported that some children were still being committed to the state penitentiary, including a fifteen-year-old serving a twenty-five-year sentence, and a fifteen-year-old recently paroled.⁸⁸

In 1915 and 1916, the board's inspections of jails and almshouses in ninety-two counties revealed substandard conditions in 75% of the counties. The Pettis County grand jury found that the "delapidated," "insecure," "unhealthful," "dark," and "damp" county jail housed children as well as adults. The Nevada jail housed four children between nine to thirteen awaiting trial for entering an abandoned dwelling and taking jewelry for which they received one dollar. The children were released from the jail when local citizens learned they were incarcerated there. By contrast, the board found the St. Louis city jail clean, with sick and healthy prisoners separated, clean sheets and towels provided weekly, and facilities for inmates to wash their own clothing.⁸⁹

The juvenile incarceration problem existed nationwide, and it stubbornly resisted solution. In 1931, the Wickersham Commission found that 54.8% of the nation's prison population was committed when they were under twenty-one, and thus were children below the age of majority. In 1943, a Federal Bureau of Prisons inspector estimated that "tens of thousands" of children were confined in the nation's jails and lockups.⁹⁰ In 1938, the federal Prison Industries Reorganization Administration reported that the Missouri state penitentiary held prisoners as young as fifteen.⁹¹

Almshouses

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the number of Missouri children in almshouses was relatively small but, according to a 1904 University of Missouri-Columbia study, was "much higher than it should be." The State Board of Charities and Corrections found that Missouri's almshouses held

142 children under fifteen in 1899, 100 children under sixteen (including 66 under fourteen) in 1909, and eighty-seven children under eighteen (including sixty-nine under sixteen and twenty under three) in 1910. The numbers were considerably less than the national average, thanks largely to efforts by the Children's Home Society, other private child placing organizations, and the State Board of Charities and Corrections itself.⁹²

Most Missouri children in almshouses were housed with one or both parents, an arrangement that made it difficult for private organizations to gain custody and remove them. Some children were placed in almshouses because their mental or physical condition precluded placement in private homes. A few toddlers were conceived in the almshouses themselves and born to unwed inmates. A 1904 call for legislation to limit a child's stay in an almshouse to one month went unheeded, and some children stayed considerably longer. A 1913 statute prohibited housing children between two and eighteen in almshouses except temporarily with their parents for no more than thirty days, but some children were nonetheless housed long-term. In 1916, the Children's Code Commission reported that one-third of Missouri almshouses housed young children.⁹³

Almshouses were not fit places for children, particularly while the juvenile court sat to provide rehabilitation and treatment. By the turn of the century, the nation's almshouses theoretically were for paupers deemed so hopeless, often because of physical or mental disability, that outdoor relief was infeasible. In 1899, the State Board of Charities and Corrections found county almshouses to be more like prisons than places of charity, "dumping' places for every conceivable manner of affliction." In 1908, the board found Missouri's almshouses "inhabited by feeble-minded, insane, and children," often in "delapidated, old, inadequate, and disgraceful buildings, unpainted, with glass broken and plaster falling down, unpapered, unwashed, infested with vermin." A year later, a board member visited several almshouses and found that half the inmates were mentally ill and sometimes chained or penned in stockades, that the buildings were old and dirty, and that the inmates sometimes included children. In 1919, the board reported that in about one-third of the counties, almshouses were wooden shacks sometimes on the verge of falling down; that in about another third, conditions were better, but still unsanitary with lack of wholesome food and neglect of sick inmates; and that in the final third, conditions were creditable.⁹⁴

Investigations of almshouses by the State Board of Charities and Corrections aroused public opinion and produced considerable embarrassment. In 1911, Governor Herbert S. Hadley called almshouse conditions "disgraceful." Two years later, Governor Elliott W. Major called for "reforms in caring for and protecting the dependents in the city and county institutions, and more humane

considerations." In 1923, Governor Arthur M. Hyde declared that "[r]ecent disclosures in the almshouse condition in many counties have shocked the conscience of the State. The situation is admittedly bad, and if one-half of what has been said is true, it should be at once corrected."⁹⁵

The state board reported in 1929 that Missouri no longer had children in almshouses, except for "an occasional one placed there very temporarily" while the juvenile court considered alternative placements. The board actually overlooked a handful of remaining children, including a ten-year-old boy confined with his unwed mother because the court was unwilling to separate them. The history of children in Missouri's almshouses had finally run its course.⁹⁶

The Reformatories

The Early Years

The Missouri Reform School For Boys at Boonville and the State Industrial School for Girls at Chillicothe were conceived as improvements over the almshouses, asylums and prisons that confined delinquent and dependent children. Ideals quickly clashed with reality. In 1911, the St. Louis Municipal Commission called conditions at Boonville "almost intolerable."⁹⁷

The Commission concluded that Boonville was "not in spirit or in fact an institution with an educational program." The commissioners criticized the reformatory as "physically in a bad condition, and suffer[ing] from lack of funds for the proper care of its inmates." The boys ate and slept barracks-style with a hundred or more in a large room, a barren institutional setting that prevented "anything like a home atmosphere or a constant individual influence." The sparse educational program was diluted by the practice of taking the boys away from the classroom for menial, and sometimes dangerous, labor that served little purpose but to help the institution remain within its budget by avoiding the hiring of outside workers.⁹⁸

Dependent boys and hardened delinquents between nine and sixteen were housed together without separation by walls or cells, and with ineffective supervision that encouraged the strong to prey on the weak. Governor Hadley reported that Boonville held perhaps a hundred older boys with criminal tendencies so severe that they should be placed in a special state reformatory away from younger inmates.⁹⁹

In 1915, Governor Major cited serious overcrowding at Boonville, but the legislature made conditions there temporarily worse by opening the institution to first-time male offenders under thirty. Courts began freely assigning adult criminals to Boonville (which was now called the Missouri Reformatory),