

where they could mix with the young boys, contrary to the best efforts of reformers for decades. The miscalculation was not corrected until 1927, when the state opened the Intermediate Reformatory For Young Men at Algoa for male offenders over twenty-one and removed them from Boonville, which once again became known as the Missouri Training School For Boys. In 1933, the legislature lowered Boonville's maximum age to seventeen.¹⁰⁰

In a 1926 federal survey of the states' expenditures per child for all purposes in industrial schools, Missouri ranked twenty-sixth, near the middle. In 1929, two national observers nonetheless described Boonville as overcrowded, "bleak, dreary, depressing," and "much out of repair." Beds sagged and were "humpy, bumpy, lumpy and dirty." At the height of the Depression two years later, a General Assembly commission reported that the buildings were "in bad shape, almost beyond repair," and that "living conditions are far from what they should be for young men and children." The commission concluded that Boonville had "outlived its usefulness and should be abandoned."¹⁰¹

The 1911 St. Louis Municipal Commission had found the Chillicothe girls' reformatory a "pleasing contrast" to Boonville. "The girls are housed in large cottages; there is a good deal of home life; the institution is kept in splendid physical shape, and the girls have a fair amount of schooling and training." The State Board of Charities and Corrections nonetheless reported that overcrowding had led Chillicothe to refuse some girls committed by the juvenile court.¹⁰²

Perhaps partly to keep children out of the forbidding state reformatories, some larger counties opened their own reformatories for delinquent and dependent children, whom the juvenile courts would not commit to Boonville or Chillicothe unless they were serious or repeat offenders. Most institutionalized St. Louis-area children, for example, were sent to the St. Louis House of Refuge, another institution not worthy of much praise. Because many smaller counties did not have funds to establish and maintain alternative juvenile institutions, many rural youths were committed to Boonville or Chillicothe for offenses that did not land metropolitan youths in the state institutions.

After the superintendent of the St. Louis House of Refuge reported in 1903 that the children were being poorly educated because inadequate appropriations left inadequate classrooms and a lack of competent teachers, the General Assembly in 1905 permitted the city to contract with the board of education for school instruction. Within a year, the city board of education created a school system at the House of Refuge, which changed its name to the St. Louis Industrial School to remove the stigma that had been attached to it as the "Ref," the name given it by the delinquent and dependent boys confined there.¹⁰³

St. Louis was not the only metropolitan area to maintain alternatives to Boonville and Chillicothe. The Greene County Juvenile Industrial Home in Springfield housed a small number of white boys. Jackson County operated

four homes. The McCune Parental School For Boys in Independence was for white boys, and the Jackson County Parental School in Independence was for white girls. The two homes for African American children were the Jackson County Home For Negro Boys and the Hiram Young Home For Negro Girls, both in Little Blue. If a girl was involved in sexual activity or had venereal disease, she would be sent to the House of the Good Shepherd, a home operated by the Catholic Church.¹⁰⁴

The Jackson County juvenile court also committed delinquent and dependent children to an array of privately supported local institutions. The Kansas City Boys' Orphans Home opened in 1895 after a sustained effort by Mrs. John Perry and other Kansas City women. The home quickly filled to capacity, and many needy orphan boys were turned away. After Mrs. Perry and her four children perished in an accident in 1898, her husband pledged funds for a larger building, which was dedicated in 1900.¹⁰⁵

Other privately operated Kansas City area institutions included St. Anthony's Home For Infants, St. Joseph's Home For Girls under high school age and the St. Joseph Home For Boys. The juvenile court also used the Spofford Home for problem children, the Jewish Orphan Home, the Evans Children's Home for children awaiting adoption, the Gillis Home for elementary school children, the Florence Home for black girls, the Niles Home For Colored Children, the Interdenominational Home for high school girls and the Y.W.C.A. Rest College.

The 1911 St. Louis Municipal Commission and other concerned groups asserted that institutional reformatories failed to meet the children's emotional needs for intimate family-style living and a personal support structure. The commission recommended that the children be cared for in rural homelike cottages established and maintained by the board of education as "parental schools" with no more than sixteen to twenty children under responsible adult supervision.¹⁰⁶

The recommendation produced swift results locally and helped set the stage for fundamental statewide reform decades later. Shortly after the girls' building at the St. Louis Industrial School was condemned and closed in 1918, the city opened the 140-acre Meramec Hills School For Girls in Valley Park. Each cottage at the new institution was a fully equipped living unit complete with kitchens and sewing facilities. The board of education conducted schoolwork, the Cooperative Club of St. Louis sponsored a business fundamentals course, and the Episcopal City Mission conducted Bible class on Saturdays and services on Sundays.¹⁰⁷

In 1920, St. Louis City opened Bellefontaine Farms in Florissant on 359 acres located on the banks of the Missouri River some distance from the city to replace the Industrial School, which was closed that year. The new institu-

tion had eight cottages that accommodated thirty boys each, a combined receiving cottage and hospital, an administration building, and a chapel. The school's program consisted of education, farm work and recreation. Like Meramec Hills, Bellefontaine admitted white and African American youth on a segregated basis. Years later, the Child Welfare League of America called the two St. Louis institutions a "great improvement" over the St. Louis Industrial School.¹⁰⁸

The 1930s

The 1930s began on a violent note at Boonville, which still held hardened juvenile criminals. On September 9, 1930, superintendent C.E. Chrane was kidnaped and shot to death by an escapee from the institution, who made his getaway in Chrane's car. The killer was caught, transferred to the state penitentiary and sentenced to life in prison for the murder.¹⁰⁹

In 1934, Boonville's new superintendent told the General Assembly that the institution was "in a deplorable condition. The equipment is inadequate and nearly all the buildings are old and in a bad state of repair. The fire hazard is a constant menace." A researcher reported that Boonville's smaller boys were housed in two crumbling, decaying buildings that leaked in the rain and were "serious fire-traps." By that time, "[t]he whole institution needed a complete scrubbing and the services of a competent vermin exterminator." The dining, room, kitchen and hospital were filthy. Boys sometimes refused to eat because the food was infested with bugs, flies and roaches (dead ones if authorities used bug-spray just before the meal). Bedbugs found their way into the mattresses.¹¹⁰ A visiting Minnesota prison warden found "something radically wrong" at Boonville because the boys "carry themselves with the air of the oppressed and the hopeless":

I cannot help but feel that these children are given little encouragement and that they hold little hope for the future. The morale is very poor. This is undoubtedly a result of overcrowding, poor food, unsanitary conditions, fear of physical punishment, and an inadequate system of recreation. It is not my policy to coddle criminals, but in this instance we have many children who are not responsible for their condition and who should be treated as children and not as dangerous criminals. The state of Missouri has sadly neglected its delinquent youngsters and under the present system there is no hope for their improvement.¹¹¹

In 1938, the Osborne Association published a four-volume report on conditions in the nation's industrial schools for delinquent and dependent juveniles.

The Association was a national corrections organization that sought to free the industrial schools from the traditional characteristics of jails and prisons. The Association found Boonville "among the worst" institutions it inspected. Boonville suffered from "partisan control, bad housing, negative discipline, mass treatment, an ineffectual program, and poor parole work in common with some of the others [the Association inspected], but it stood alone in the extent to which it followed the pattern of the old-time prison."¹¹²

The Association harshly criticized Boonville's assignment of nearly all boys to several hours of daily physical labor that "emphasize[d] production and custody rather than training." The labor included shifts at the institution's profit-making quarry, which had about thirty boys doing hazardous, back-breaking work extracting rock and operating a stone crusher for no wages. To the Association's representatives, the quarry work force "fairly shouted 'convict labor.'"¹¹³

By the late 1930s, Boonville had a full high school course, though more than 80% of the boys received training in unskilled work only. Much of the training was designed merely to use inmates' labor to sustain the institution within its tight budget. In 1938, the federal Prison Industries Reorganization Administration recommended that the state shift emphasis from "work for the institution's maintenance" to "training for the boys' future."¹¹⁴

From the start, Boonville was organized on a military model, with the boys assigned to companies by age. The Osborne Association found the prison atmosphere reinforced by "[s]haved heads, typically prison uniforms, V's cut in the heels of the shoes [to help identify escapees], and the use of numbers instead of names." "Modern principles and methods of dealing with delinquents did not receive even lip service" from most of the staff interviewed. The few staff willing to take rehabilitation and training seriously were "hopelessly in the minority and thoroughly discouraged by the lack of support from the administration." One officer referred to the rock quarry. "What's the use when it is more important to have boys to crush stone for a commercial firm than to teach them anything?"¹¹⁵

Once a boy was committed to Boonville, the juvenile court's control was virtually over because the institution did not inform the court about the child's progress. The institution determined when and whether the boy should be discharged, normally without notifying the court. In a 1924 survey, the National Probation Association found that boys discharged from Boonville were not supervised by probation departments and received only whatever aftercare was available from private sources such as Big Brothers. By 1935, aftercare was described as "haphazard," with a visit from the parole officer no more than once a year.¹¹⁶

Meanwhile at Chillicothe, an increase in the number of committed girls

required erection of additional cottages during the 1930s. The institution had an elementary and high school program, but still stressed a domestic education because, according to its 1939-1940 biennial report, "after leaving here practically every girl marries and establishes her own home, and many of them, through lack of other ability, must earn their livings as domestics." By the end of the decade, changing social and economic conditions led Chillicothe to offer vocational and commercial training as well as the traditional domestic education. The school's annual expenditure of \$419 per child fell far short of the average of \$600 for reformatories elsewhere in the nation, but Chillicothe was nonetheless one of the few American institutions for delinquent girls to offer a complete high school education.¹¹⁷

The verdict on Chillicothe was mixed. A 1929 researcher found its vocational program to be one of the best in the nation's juvenile reformatories. In 1938, the Osborne Association gave the school a low ranking among midwestern juvenile institutions because of "shameful overcrowding, dissension among staff members, precarious disciplinary control, and the housing of girls in dilapidated firetraps under physically and morally unhealthy conditions."¹¹⁸

The problems suffered by Missouri's three state reformatories stemmed largely from the nature of state administrative control. In the 1930s, the reformatories came under the control and management of the Department of Penal Institutions, the same agency that managed the state penitentiary and the Intermediate Reformatory for Young Men at Algoa. The Department was also charged with investigating and recommending all pardons and paroles from the three reformatories.

Critics charged that the Department of Penal Institutions naturally ran the juvenile reformatories like prisons, contrary to the emerging view that industrial schools should be centers for training and meaningful rehabilitation. The 1939 Children's Code Commission called for removing the Department's control because the reformatories were primarily educational rather than penal institutions, and because children treated in the juvenile court should not suffer the stigma of confinement in an institution operated by the state's penal authority. The Constitution of 1945 formally classified state training schools as educational institutions, and the State Board of Training Schools was established to administer them.¹¹⁹

The Later Years

By 1940, the Boonville school had a population of 400 boys (277 white and 123 black), the Chillicothe school had 241 girls, and the Tipton school had 76 girls. All three continued committing delinquents who were older or not candidates for probation or other less restrictive placement. Boonville also

continued to admit children under ten and children whose only "offense" was homelessness or dependency.¹²⁰

Conditions at Boonville remained harsh throughout the 1940s. In 1946, the Children's Code Commission recommended relocating the institution because its facilities were no longer adequate for training and rehabilitation, and because further expansion was impossible with the town expanding around it. By all accounts, the half-way measures recommended by the Commission did not go nearly far enough.¹²¹

In 1947, Governor Phil M. Donnelly reported that Boonville continued to hold both young vulnerable boys and older hardened delinquents. Inmates ranged "from children eight and nine years of age who are committed primarily because of neglect in their homes. These children are not essentially incorrigible but need the guidance and the discipline comparable to that of a model home life. At the other extreme are boys sixteen to seventeen years of age, who . . . have become potential criminals. It is impossible to adjust many of them to normal social attitudes."¹²²

According to social worker Albert Deutsch in 1950, Boonville's boys were "mixed indiscriminately – the younger with the older, dangerous mental cases with the normals, the first offender with the hardened repeater, the frightened child with the sadistic hoodlum." Deutsch reported that boys were frequently beaten by the underpaid, poorly trained guards. "[T]error-stricken and desperate boys had been escaping from the institution in great numbers," about four hundred in 1948 alone. He called the institution a "hellhole" with a "long-standing tradition of sadistic maltreatment and a grossly inadequate budget."¹²³

Many Boonville residents demanded the institution's removal from their community because they feared the escaping boys. On the night of March 17, 1948, after violent inmates had recently killed two boys at the school and committed a series of assaults, a convoy of Highway Patrol cars carrying Governor Donnelly and armed officers drove there. The officers forcibly removed seventy-one of the most violent boys, and transferred them in chains to cells in the state penitentiary. The Governor then dismissed Boonville's entire board.¹²⁴

In its 1948 annual report, the State Board of Training Schools stated frankly that Boonville was in "a state of physical and moral collapse." "The entire atmosphere was such as to lead anyone to easily conclude that if 300 model boys from even the best families in Missouri were placed in this institution, within a reasonable time they would deteriorate and become juvenile menaces. . . . [T]he condition of the cattle at the Training School has always been as good as the condition of the children was bad."¹²⁵

Boonville confined both white and black children, but juvenile courts sometimes sent a black child there under circumstances that would have landed a white child in a private institution or other alternative placement.

Boonville would be used because many private institutions refused to accept blacks until the 1960s. In 1950, the Missouri Association For Social Welfare recommended that Boonville's black children be permitted to "share in all the programs provided for white boys," be permitted to eat with the white boys in the same dining hall rather than in a separate isolated unit, and be given more vocational opportunities on an equal basis with the whites.¹²⁶

After the violence of the late 1940s, the state built new cottages at Boonville, leading Governor Forrest Smith to say in early 1951 that "much progress and improvement" had taken place at the institution. Conditions continued to deteriorate by the late 1950s, when St. Louis County juvenile court judge Noah Weinstein sent a young social worker named Dave Barrett to tour the Boonville reformatory and report back to him. At the time, Barrett was earning his masters degree in social work at St. Louis University and doing a work-study project at the court. After serving as a social worker at the court from 1957 to 1959, he returned home to his native Vancouver, became a force in Canadian national politics and was elected Premier of British Columbia in the early 1970s. His tour of Boonville left indelible memories. "The prisoners, who were all kids, were crammed together with no privacy and inadequate toilet facilities," he recalled nearly forty years later. "There were no services to prepare the kids for the day when they left the institution. The staff seemed to be doing their jobs, but with little sensitivity. It was just a dumping ground."¹²⁷

All the while, the white girls' reformatory at Chillicothe and the black girls' reformatory at Tipton were assuredly separate, but a 1943 study indicated that they were not equal. Despite its budget woes, Chillicothe had cottages located in a pleasant residential section on sixty-nine acres on the outskirts of town, and a 280-acre rented farm with rich soil suitable for the farming taught at the school. The school generated its own electricity, but was connected to city water and sewage systems. By 1940, most of Chillicothe's cottages were relatively new or in good condition. Daily meals featured meat at least once, three-quarters of a quart of milk per girl, fruit and vegetables, hot cereal at breakfast in the winter, and a sweet dessert at least once. Each girl could have as much food as she wished.¹²⁸

The Chillicothe girls' own rooms averaged ten by eleven feet, and most had relatively new furniture. The school building was a three-story well-lighted, well-ventilated, fireproof structure, with classrooms, a large gymnasium, auditorium, and a large well-lighted library with about 4000 purchased and donated books, some in disrepair because the institution had no librarian. Vocational and domestic training facilities were described as quite adequate.¹²⁹

The Chillicothe school's hospital had modern equipment and five rooms for clinic and routine daily medical and dental work. Other rooms were

available for emergencies and for isolation in case of epidemics. A nurse was on duty full-time, a physician was on call and visited the institution three times each week, and a dentist visited twice each week. In 1937, the federal Prison Industries Reorganization Administration found the school's hospital to be "probably the finest and most adequately equipped of its kind in the United States," even though the school had virtually no psychiatric or psychological services.¹³⁰

The girls at Chillicothe wore uniforms, which the 1943 study found were "in no way elaborate," but "exceptionally good." Each new girl was issued three new print dresses, black or brown oxfords, two changes of underwear, a nightgown, a housecoat, and work aprons and kulottes. Replacements were provided when needed. Winter wear included heavy wool coats, yarn gloves, berets and galoshes.¹³¹

Tipton was another story, according to the 1943 study. The buildings were well built, almost completely fireproof, and grouped together well off the road in the center of a large and attractively landscaped lawn. But delivery of supplies was often slow to the school, which was located on a country road only partially graveled and almost impassable in wet weather. Efforts to teach farming and raise food were handicapped because much of the soil was so poor that it could hardly sustain crops. Water pressure was so low that it could barely reach the second floor of the living quarters, and the water was so hard that it had to be softened with the school's antiquated water softening equipment before it could be used. Sewage disposal was poor, and most of the school's facilities were ill equipped.¹³²

Efforts to attract quality staff to Tipton were hampered by salaries considerably lower than those paid at Chillicothe and by racial discrimination in local recreational facilities. Tipton's entire staff was black, and the superintendent often had to hire anyone who applied, regardless of qualifications. The superintendent herself also performed the roles of nurse, secretary, discipline officer, recreation director, religious leader and parole officer. Budgetary restrictions left the school with only the minimum essentials for food, with little meat, milk or fresh fruit for the girls. The school's milk cows sometimes had to be slaughtered to provide food. "[T]he only adequate source of food," the 1943 study found, "was the vegetable garden, and it was not too productive because of the poor soil." The study found the school's educational program characterized by "detention with little training." The school had few medical supplies and no resident medical or dental care.¹³³

When a girl arrived at Tipton, she would receive the school uniform. "It would not be an exaggeration," the 1943 study reported, "to say that the girls . . . are dressed in rags with little immediate possibility of securing any better clothing." "The supply of winter jackets is so limited that three or four girls

must wear the same jacket. Heavier clothing for outside work is more or less community property because it is placed in the main office and is worn by any of the girls as needed. There are no supplies of galoshes, hats, long stockings, or heavy underwear. Many of the shoes are in a condition beyond all possible repair; in fact, some of the shoes have no soles at all, yet the girls continue to wear them.”¹³⁴

Shortly before the 1943 study was published, the Governor vetoed an appropriation of about \$5,000 for Tipton, an amount he said exceeded the school's needs by \$4,297.¹³⁵

Little had changed by 1950, when the Missouri Association For Social Welfare remarked gingerly that “[t]raining, in general, at Tipton, is not as complete as at Chillicothe.” After deteriorating conditions at Boonville made headlines throughout the state for weeks in 1949, the Association praised the legislature and the Board of Training Schools for building new “well planned, well furnished and sanitary cottages” at Boonville and Chillicothe. The praise made no mention of Tipton.¹³⁶

In the 1940s and 1950s, lingering dissatisfaction with the three state reformatories encouraged private facilities to assume a more important role in juvenile corrections. In 1948, for example, a group of war veterans and business people incorporated Boys Town of Missouri, which began operating on the cottage plan on 120 acres in St. James the following year with twelve boys referred by the juvenile courts. According to a former Boys Town superintendent, the founders were moved by conditions at Boonville and Bellefontaine Farms: “Bellefontaine Farms was devoid of any professional program for social rehabilitation, had no social workers, and maintained control over the boys by an acknowledged use of a leather strap and other repressive measures. . . . The Boonville institution was suffering from a period of upheaval when a newly appointed ‘blue ribbon’ board found it necessary to resort to the newspapers to expose the previous shortcomings and brutality by former administrators.”¹³⁷

Boys Town operated without public funding until 1976, when it began receiving federal and state matching funds under the federal Social Security Act. From the beginning, boys were admitted from all parts of the state without regard to race or creed, though cottages were segregated until the late 1950s. Called Boys & Girls Town since it became coeducational in 1992, it operates facilities in St. Louis, Springfield and Columbia that serve more than two thousand children and families each year through residential treatment, outreach, individualized education and programs for victims and perpetrators of substance or sexual abuse.¹³⁸

In 1960, a state committee appointed by Governor James T. Blair, Jr. reported that during the prior decade, insufficient appropriations had prevented the

state's reformatories from keeping pace with the increased number of children committed by the juvenile courts. "Although some advancements have been made in physical properties it has not been possible to expand professional services . . ., with the result that the training school program is seriously hampered."¹³⁹

The state closed Tipton and combined it with Chillicothe in 1960. In the early 1980s, the state closed Boonville and Chillicothe and created a network of smaller regional, community based treatment facilities for delinquent children. Once Missouri took this forthright action, the state became the acknowledged national leader in juvenile corrections, with a system widely acclaimed as a sterling model for other states.

Houses of Detention

When the early juvenile court acts prohibited incarceration of delinquents with adults, the mandate applied not only to the court's final disposition, but also to pre-hearing detention. The acts prohibited juvenile courts from detaining alleged delinquents in jails or police stations. Where a juvenile could not post bail or be safely released in a relative's custody before the hearing, the juvenile would remain with a private association charged with caring for neglected children, or in the county house of detention (which, the acts specified, must be "outside the inclosure of any jail or police station, and be in charge of a superintendent, matron, or other person of good moral character . . . appointed by the circuit court").¹⁴⁰

To accommodate delinquent and dependent children before hearings, many larger counties maintained houses of detention early in the century, though many rural counties found it more economical to board the children with private individuals or associations. Some rural counties detained so few children that the cost per child of maintaining a house of detention would have been higher than housing the children in the most expensive hotel in town.

The earliest county houses of detention were not particularly hospitable places. In the St. Louis City juvenile court's earliest years, for example, detained children were held in the House of Refuge, whose deplorable conditions led the city to open a separate house of detention on Clark Avenue in 1907. In 1911, the St. Louis Municipal Commission charged that the new house of detention was an "unsafe and unsanitary . . . fire-trap" needing "immediate repairs." The house was so small, the commission concluded, that children spent the day in their bedrooms, without proper separation and supervision. The new house furnished little or no instruction or recre-