

Correction News



Message From Mayor
Rudolph W. Giuliani - Page 4

Special Edition No. 1

June 1995

2 Correction Centennials

June 5 Marked 100th Anniversary of Law Establishing DOC

Jan. 1 Marks 100th Anniversary of DOC Operating on Its Own



Levi P. Morton

Governor Signed DOC Into Law

Ex-Vice President Helped Shape DOC

The governor who signed the DOC-creation bill into law 100 years ago was Levi Parsons Morton, who only two years earlier completed serving a term as U. S. Vice President.

In 1861, seven years after opening a dry goods business in the city, Morton founded an investment banking house that bore his name and helped keep the Union financially afloat during the Civil War and advanced U.S. postwar international trade interests. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives (1879-81) and as U.S. minister to France (1881-85).

In 1888, Morton was elected Vice President on the Republican ticket headed by Benjamin Harrison against then-President Grover Cleveland, himself a former New York governor. Cleveland had won the popular vote but lost in the Electoral College. Four years later he defeated Harrison. Morton then returned to New York where in 1894 he was elected governor.



Grover Cleveland

President When DOC Created

Chapter 912 Split Public Charities and Correction

Monday, June 5th, 1995, marked the 100th anniversary of the law mandating that New York City establish the Department of Correction as a separate agency.

On Wednesday, June 5th, 1895, in Albany, then-Governor Levi Morton signed into law Chapter 912 (of the statutes enacted at the 118th Session of the New York State Legislature). The legislation divided the city Department of Charities and Correction.

Chapter 912's preamble described the law as: "an act to abolish the department of public charities and correction in the city of New York, and to provide for the establishment of two separate departments in place thereof, to be known respectively as 'The department of public charities of the city of New York' and 'The department of correction of the city of New York,' and to define the powers and duties of such departments."

It declared that the terms of office of the commissioners of the old combined department "cease and terminate on and after midnight of the 31st of December following passage hereof."

In effect, it required the New York City mayor appoint a Correction Commissioner and three Public Charities Commissioners by Dec. 21, 1895, to assume those offices Jan. 1, 1896. The term of office was set at six years until appointment and qualification of successors. The per annum salary for charity commissioners was set at \$5,000, and for the correction commissioner, \$7,500.

Chapter 912 gave the public charities department "charge of all hospitals, asylums, almshouses and other institutions belonging to the city or county of New York which are devoted to the care of the insane, the feeble-minded, the sick, the infirm, and the destitute, except the hospital wards attached to" (Continued on Page 3)



William L. Strong
Fathered DOC

Fusion Mayor Reformed DOC&C

Mayor William L. Strong, who came to power as a Fusion candidate fielded in 1894 by reformers, fathered the emergence of Correction as a separate city agency. A businessman nominally Republican, he ran with corruption fighter Democrat John W. Goff and named a former U.S. Civil Service Commissioner, Theodore Roosevelt, to steady the then scandal-ridden Police Department.

In his first annual message to the Common Council, submitted January 8th, 1895, shortly after taking office, Mayor Strong declared: "I am clearly of the opinion that the care of the indigent should be separate from the discipline of those who have broken the law. To continue these branches together pre-

(Continued on Page 4)



Theodore Roosevelt
Police Commissioner

Reform's Reasons Focused on Patients

The reasoning behind the reform splitting Public Charities and Correction focused on protecting poor patients from inmates.

Besides concerns about actual exploitation by inmates working in hospitals, the reformers were concerned that ill indigents were being stigmatized by association departmentally with accused and convicted criminals. The agency division bill had emanated from" (Continued on Page 3.)

Penitentiary, Workhouse, Prison count Began at 2,650

On Jan. 1, 1896, the Department of Correction began operating on its own, no longer joined to Public Charities.

The initial inmate census on Jan. 1, 1896, was put at 2,650. That count was among the statistics contained in the Department's first quarterly report to the Mayor, filed April 10th, 1896, and published in *The City Record* May 2, 1896.

Of the initial total, the Penitentiary and Workhouse on Blackwell's Island (now known as Roosevelt Island) accounted for 2,009 inmates -- 1,049 in the Penitentiary and 960 in the Workhouse. The City Prison, also known as the Tombs, contributed 465 to the total with the remaining 176 coming from the five District Prisons. By the end of the quarter -- that is, on March 31, 1896 -- the total inmate population had risen by more than 10 percent to 2,926.

Much of the first quarterly report of the first DOC Commissioner, Robert J. Wright, was concerned -- as were subsequent reports -- with detailing the work done by inmates for the Department of Public Charities as well as for the Correction Department itself.

The number of things made or repaired and the number of days labor expended were recorded in precise detail, even down to the count of shrouds sewn. The occupations listed include blacksmiths, tinsmiths, carpenters, painters, upholsterers, cot and broom makers, tailors, stone cutters, yard and coal workers, and outdoor laborers.

Wright itemized the number of inmate days of "ordinary labor" done for -- and in many cases, done at -- various city facilities "under the care and supervision of Keepers" (the 19th Century term for Correction Officers). These included: Bellevue, City, Gouverneur, Ran- (Continued on Page 3.)



Robert Jefferson Wright
DOC's First Commissioner

New Agency, Not New Commissioner

Under terms of Chapter 912 establishing the Correction Department, Mayor William L. Strong had until Dec. 21, 1895, to name his appointees to run the two emerging departments. He did so 11 A.M., Dec. 21, designating Robert J. Wright as Commissioner of Correction. Named Commissioners of Public Charities were John P. Faure, Retired Gen. James R. O'Beirne and Silas C. Croft.

Both Wright and Faure were Mayor Strong-appointees to the old combined Charities and Correction board and therefore already familiar with their departments' operations.

Commissioner Wright's background was that of business. He was a partner in the fertilizer firm of Kane & Wright. A staunch Republican, he had been first appointed by Mayor Strong in Spring 1895 to the old Charities and Correction board.

(Continued on Page 4)



Francis J. Lantry
First Greater NY DOC Commissioner