



To pursue, preserve and promote the history of correctional services in the city and state of New York.

Correction * Probation * Juvenile Justice * Youth Services * Parole * Incarceration Alternatives * Post Release Support

President
Alan J. Croce

Vice President
Brian Fischer

2nd Vice President
Leasa McLeish

General Secretary*
Thomas McCarthy

Counsel
Ernesto Marrero

NYCHS thanks the family of the late John N. Miskell, Auburn Prison historian, for making his archives available for our website use.



Late ret. Dep. Superintendent John N. Miskell with Auburn Prison yard in background.

New York Correction History Society
newsletter December 2009 Vol.1 No. 7

The Key
NYCHS

Correction Academy, 66-26 Metropolitan Ave, Middle Village, N.Y. 11379

NYCHS@nyc.rr.com
www.correctionhistory.org

(718) 417-2315
(718) 417-2326
Fax

CorrectionHistory.Org Into Its 2nd Decade as Major Web Resource

As the 21st Century nears the start of its second decade, the web pages of NYCHS (that already is in its second decade) continue to serve as a note worthy resource for bringing correction history to the attention of New Yorkers from one end of the state to the other; i.e., from Brooklyn to Buffalo.

The *Times'* Fort Hamilton and Clinton Hill blog *The Local* Dec. 4 and the paper's Sunday Metro section Dec. 6 picked up on NYCHS web story about NYS' last hanging execution that took place at the Raymond Street Jail 120



The Hangman's Final Bow
By ANDY NEWMAN

Above: Elements from NYT blog page about NYCHS story on NY's last hanging execution. It took place Dec. 6, 1889 in Brooklyn. Below: Elements from Buffalo area papers on NYCHS execution research.



Cattaraugus County
History society delves into past of 12 executions

By Rick Miller
Clean Times Herald

On the Web
Months of research by a former New York City newspaperman into 12 Cattaraugus County executions between 1870 and 1940 have been published on the New York Correction History Society.

where worked in public relations and became Corrections' first webmaster. He brings a reporter's eye



Auburn historian's archives items going on-line at NYCHS site

On Dec. 7, 2009, the first item from the archives of the late Auburn prison historian John N. Miskell, made available by his family for use by the NYCHS website, went on-line.

Entitled *Better Than Hanging*, it became the seventh Miskell monograph on the site, the other six having been personally contributed by him for use on the site even though he didn't have a computer. This, like the six

Continued on next page.



Electric chair image used as home page icon to access first Miskell archives item on-line.

Continued on Page 3..

Auburn historian's archives go on-line at NYCHS website

Continued from front page.

monographs posted earlier on the site, had been produced on a typewriter. The manuscript was found among the scrapbooks, albums, photos, clippings and other historical materials filling a half dozen cardboard boxes that John's son, Jim, had helped load into the trunk of the NYCHS webmaster's car during the latter's visit to the Miskell home in Auburn Nov. 21st, 2009.

By happenstance, the subject matter of the monograph -- the world's first execution by electricity Aug. 6, 1890 at Auburn -- made it a logical follow-up to a presentation that had been unveiled on the website for the 140th anniversary of the state's last hanging execution which had taken place Dec. 6, 1889 at the Raymond St. Jail in Brooklyn

The 24-page manuscript was dated March 27, 1990. But unlike other Miskell monographs this one had not been printed on special paper with openings that permitted insertion of spiral plastic binding. A metal paper clip held these sheets together.

The second item from the Miskell archives posted on



the website was a 24-page booklet distributed at the 1970 state fair in Syracuse and celebrating the Centennial of the American Correctional Association (ACA). Entitled "100 Years of Prog-



Above: Auburn Prison Deputy Superintendent John Miskell addresses inmate class of 1974. Below: Miskell receives an award recognizing his work on behalf of inmate education.

ress, it contrasted how NY state prisons were in 1870 when the ACA began, with strong NY leadership, as the National Prison Association with the way they were as of August 1970, the booklet's



Notes on the back of this photo from the Miskell archives, dated "9-25-75," identify center figure as then State Education Commissioner Ewald Nyquist. Second left is William Ciuros, then state deputy correction commissioner and later NYC Correction Commissioner. Miskell is on the far right. Third right is Kevin Heimel, the first inmate to earn a degree under a state university college program.

date of publication. Highlighted were NY correctional education programs.

John, who retired from DOCS in 1980 after 33 years, had been director of the prison's Osborne School and in charge of inmate programs.

He had BS and Masters Degree from SUNY Oswego and taught criminal justice at Cayuga Community College as an associate professor both before and during retirement.

Miskell collected historical materials, researched Auburn prison history, wrote and lectured about it both before and during retirement.

Years before his death Nov. 16, 2006, he turned over to the NYCHS website for posting his writings that he had placed in soft-covered books with plastic spiral binding.

So far, six of those writings have been posted on site:

- Medal of Honor inmate
- Copper John
- The Bell
- Seminary & the Prison
- Executions: 1890-1916
- Why Auburn?

NYCHS in 2nd Decade as Major Web Resource

Continued from front page.

years ago. German immigrant John Greenwall, a tailor by trade and a thief by rap sheet and reputation, was hanged for the murder of Manhattan hat firm senior staffer Lyman Smith Weeks during a burglary of the victim's DeKalb Ave. home March 15, 1887. After Greenwall's hanging Dec. 6, 1889, all capital sentences in the state were carried out by electrocution.

To note that date marking the transition from "the noose" to "the chair" in capital punishment history, www.correctionhistory.org website unveiled a 2-Part



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2008

NY Correction History Society: Cattaraugus County



To mark this December month of Cattaraugus County's Bicentennial, the website of the New York Correction History Society (NYCHS) is unveiling a **multi-page timeline** presentation on the executions of 12 men convicted of murder in that "Enchanted Mountains County" of southwestern New York.

Besides detailing the 12 murder cases individually, the timeline presentation also serves as a vehicle to explore interesting historical developments that provide wider context to the cases. These include looking at the histories of the county jails, sheriffs, and courts as well as at execution methods and at other Cattaraugus-related murder case convictions not resulting in executions.

NY historian Jack Warren, on his NY History blog, posted an extensive story about the www.correctionhistory.org timeline of the 12 Cattaraugus murderer executions, NYCHS research undertaken in observance of that Buffalo region county's centennial.

presentation that examines the case in detail. The study raises questions about the prosecution and court processes that resulted, after two trials, in the condemned man's state-implemented broken-neck death.

Another NYCHS research project that drew media attention during the preceding 12 months was the Cattaraugus County murderers execution timeline. It was undertaken as NYCHS' participation in that Buffalo

region county's centennial observance. Besides detailing the 12 murder cases individually, the timeline presentation also served as a vehicle to explore interesting historical developments that provide wider context to the cases.

These included looking at the histories of the county jails, sheriffs, and courts as well as at execution methods and at other Cattaraugus-related murder case convictions not resulting in

executions. The timing of the presentation's unveiling -- mid-December 2008 -- was appropriate because the first and the last Cattaraugus murders resulting in executions took place during Decembers 70 years apart. The first happened Dec. 18, 1869; the last, Dec. 9, 1939.

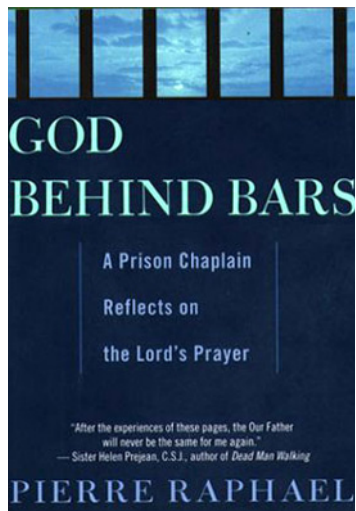
The Olean Times Herald gave the story front page spotlight while *The Buffalo News* gave it a three-column spread on Page 3.

Historian Jack Warren devoted his Dec. 18, 2008 entry to it on his New York History blog. Cattaraugus County Historian, who assisted NYCHS with the project, promoted it from the county museum during the centennial.

Yet another NYCHS research project initiated in the preceding 12 months has drawn interest from other historians and museums: the previously untold story of Hart Island's reform school ship *Mercury* as NYS/NYC's first nautical training vessel, an ancestor of SUNY Maritime College.

The director of the campus Maritime Industry Museum at Fort Schuyler has invited the NYCHS webmaster to write an article about the *Mercury* for the museum newsletter.

The two-day *Researching NY 2009* history conference held last month at SUNY *Continued on Page 4.*



Excerpt Chaplain's Rikers Book

Among NYCHS website additions during the preceding 12 months was presentation of extensive excerpts from former Rikers chaplain Pierre Raphael's book *God Behind Bars* that

Continued on Page 4.



Above: *Mercury* image from www.correctionhistory.org 8-Part history about that Hart Island reform school ship, NYS/NYC's first nautical training vessel, focus of Albany conference paper.

Chaplain Book Just 1 of Website Additions in 2009



Fingerprint historian Michael Harling, in an essay especially written for NYCHS, updates his "Origins of the New York State Bureau of Identification" with "Loose Ends and Coincidences," tying up the former and connecting the latter.

Continued from Page 3.

reflect on the Lord's Prayer from the prison perspective and on prison life from the Lord's Prayer perspective. Inserted in the excerpts web pages are digital images of the remains of the chapel inside Rikers Penitentiary aka House of Detention for Men aka currently James A. Thomas Center.



The seldom mentioned history of NYC reformatory and NYS prison forestry projects is spotlighted in 'Ernest Blue Vistas in the Trees Beyond Prison Bars' which tells stories associated with the life and times of Ernest W. Blue. Compiled by his son, Allan G. Blue, in collaboration with NYCHS.



Text of Dr. Dora B. Schriro's appointment as NYC Correction Commissioner.

The excerpts presentation is the NYCHS website's second sampling of a book by him, now Spiritual Director of Abraham House, an alternative-to-incarceration residence in the South Bronx. The first was his *Inside Rikers Island* which remains on site and can be accessed from the *God Behind Bars* presentation as can pages about Abraham House.

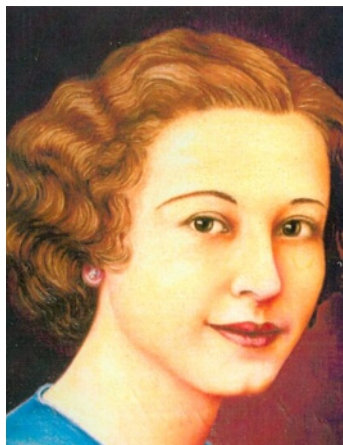


Rikers Island -- Bd./Dept. of Ed. Schools' 50th Anniversary: 2009 touches on the history of the the two agencies' cooperation to educate inmates. It includes text from the printed program for graduation exercises and photos of the ceremonies during which 2 DOCers were honored. It links to the Hart Island reform school ship history that resulted from NYCHS research initiated originally in connection with the Rikers schools' 50th anniversary



A *Mighty Outraged Woman* examines Anna M. Kross' career as lawyer, judge, and NYC DOC commissioner.

The *God Behind Bars* excerpts presentation is only one of several additions to www.correctionhistory.org made during 2009. Elsewhere on this newsletter page are images and captions about some of the others that have been added. Clicking an image will access its linked presentation.



Son seeks to ID Clinton inmate who painted mom's portrait.



A PowerPoint presentation of 60+ photos.

correctionhistory.org A Major Resource

Continued from Page 3.

Albany included a NYCHS slide presentation about the *Mercury*. Key figures in the City Island Historical Society and Nautical Museum and in the East Bronx History Forum have also indicated interest in scheduling such a presentation.



A full-page feature about Hart Island from the *Sun* of Dec. 13, 1908, is made readable in 13 close-up images of the text and photos.



The teaser "Mystery of how 'same' 2 JATC inmate murals could appear at same time in both mess hall and corridor" explores artwork in a Robert DiNero - Billy Crystal movie.



Mystery Photos Rescued During Central Office Move to Bulova Center
8 photos saved during move of NYC DOC hq from 60 Hudson St., Manhattan. Viewers invited to help ID those in the pictures.