



How the New Sing Sing Prison Will Look, According to Plans by State Architect Lewis F. Pilcher.

Not Convicts, Graduates of Sing Sing University

Plans for the New State Prison Are Based on Giving the Inmates a Useful Education That Will Fit Them for Honest Work

THE reconstruction of Sing Sing Prison, the greatest State undertaking within the last decade, will be under way in six weeks. In place of the antiquated cell-block prison there is to be a great reception and classification prison that will embody features of a vocational training school all carefully planned. The building operations will cover about two years, and the Legislature has appropriated \$750,000, of which \$200,000 is immediately available for the work.

Lewis F. Pilcher, State Architect, has made a three-year study of prison construction all over the world and consulted with foremost experts. The designs were executed by F. B. O'Connor of his staff. The plan has been approved by the Commission on New Prisons of the State of New York, of which Charles Bulkley Hubbell is Chairman.

"It is my hope, entirely outside of the work of this commission," said Mr. Hubbell, "that the time is not far distant when prison extension work will be just as formally recognized as university extension work, and that schools of fifty and perhaps more men will be sent from the prisons to more or less remote parts of the State, where they can be engaged on public works, building roads, and such things, to their own advantage and the advantage of the State as well. I am hopeful that such employment may be required by fair pay."

"No department of the responsibility of the State has remained so stationary in the last hundred years as prison administration. In the light of the recent development in psychology and psychiatry as related to the wards of the State, it would seem as though we were on the eve of the same kind of development in that department of social science as marked the period when the aeroplane and the submarine made a new volume in the history of civilization.

"Within a year after the day Governor Whitman signed the law making the vast prison undertaking possible," said State Architect Pilcher, "there will be perfected a complete working organization for the reconstruction of Sing Sing.

"Planned after the Romans—the greatest concrete builders—buildings of concrete will be erected by the inmates of the prisons of the State. They will form a reception and classification prison for the State. There will be no architectural extravagance in design. The buildings will be of straight, concrete poured walls, with not a corrected line or bow. The stone will be crushed and the sand made by the convicts. Even the tools with which they will work will be the product of their skill.

"The building of this series of massive

prison structures will be prosecuted by all groups of prison inmates, except the violent and the advanced fever patients.

The men are better off physically because of this outdoor work in that invigorating, tissue-building climate in the Adirondacks.

"And so the work at Sing Sing will be performed by the efforts of normal and the slightly subnormal convicts. The advance guard of these prison workers will soon be sent to Sing Sing. They will be housed in the blacksmith and the wagon shops in the north end of the prison yard, converted into dormitories. This advance guard will be composed of men versed in building construction. Skilled mechanics from the different prisons will be assembled at Sing Sing in a working force which will ultimately reach 500. There will be stonemasons, bricklayers, carpenters, concrete workers, plumbers, steamfitters, and laborers, convicts who have already shown a proficiency along certain lines of work. The squad foremen will work under superintendents of construction and the Superintendent of Prisons, the Superintendent of Public Works, and the Department of Architecture. The prisoners will be under guard and efficient workmanship will be rewarded with prison liberties in the judgment of the Superintendent of Prisons.

"The commission will determine the new prison policy for the State. I believe that this should revolve upon a policy of scientific sanitary and mechanical classification of prisoners, and it is along these lines that the new Sing Sing has been designed. The reception and classification prison will provide for the registration of all men committed to our prisons. They will be placed under the surveillance of trained psychiatrists and the X-ray, the Wasserman and the dementia tests will be applied where necessary. A classification will follow, and from the main reception building the prisoners will go to the main detention building when found normal, while those subnormal, physically and mentally, will go to a clinical building, then to observation cells and hospitals, where those afflicted with tuberculosis or other infectious or contagious disease can be housed for care and treatment as to their needs.

"The present cell block will not be entirely demolished until the new buildings on the east side of the railroad tracks are partly completed. Then this massive stone structure, with its damp and ill ventilated cells, now nearly 100 years old, will pass out of existence.

"The size of the cells in the new prison will be 5 feet 9 inches wide, 9 feet 6 inches deep, and 8 feet 6 inches high. A cell in the present Sing Sing cell block is 6 feet 11 inches by 3 feet 4 inches. The cubic contents of the new cells will be 437 cubic feet as against 154 cubic feet in the present cell-block cell. Each cell in the new buildings will have a toilet and a lavatory.

"The reception, classification, and observation buildings will be located on a plateau sixty feet above the roadway. It is a commanding site, providing a

view of the Hudson River for miles to the north and the south. The reception building will be reached by a circular driveway from the street. The main detention building will be to the north, as well as the observation buildings, while the contagious hospitals will be on the east side of the prison grounds.

"The present swimming pool will be enlarged and the stone from the present cell block will be used in facing up the walls in the pool. A recreation and baseball field will be provided at the north end of the prison yard."