

# **Cleveland Workhouse and House of Refuge and Correction Records 1855-1950**



*Guide to the Scholarly Resources  
Microfilm Edition*

From the holdings of the Western Reserve  
Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio

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# Introduction

The Cleveland Workhouse was formally established as a separate institution in January 1871. The Workhouse had previously shared quarters with the City Infirmery in the Brooklyn district of Cleveland. The new location was originally intended as a place where petty law-breakers could work at productive occupations, specifically chair and brush making, to help pay their fines and court costs. In July 1871 the House of Refuge and Correction was established as part of the Workhouse to give the same opportunities to law-breakers under the age of sixteen. A school, under the direction of the chaplain, was established with the House of Refuge for both juvenile and adult prisoners.

After a farm colony was built in Warrensville in 1905, under the auspices of Harris R. Cooley, head of the Cleveland Department of Charities and Correction, the Workhouse and House of Refuge gradually moved their operations to that site, until they were completely established there in 1907. The Workhouse became part of the Warrensville complex known as the Cooley Farms. The Farms consisted of the Correction Farm, Overlook Farm (a tuberculosis sanatorium), Highland Park Farm (500 acres of land intended for use as a city cemetery), and the Boys' Farm.

At this time the Cleveland Workhouse became one of the leading progressive penal institutions in the country. The guiding principle of the Workhouse—rehabilitation through productive occupation—changed somewhat during this period. The adult male prisoners were removed from chair and brush making to outdoor occupations such as building roads, digging ditches, crushing stone, and growing farm produce. The women and juvenile prisoners continued to make chairs and brushes. The Workhouse

maintained its position as a progressive penal institution through the mayoralties of Tom L. Johnson and Newton D. Baker.

Although the Workhouse has diminished in prominence, it still exists as a prison in Warrensville under the name of the Warrensville House of Correction of the City of Cleveland.

## Scope and Content

The *Cleveland Workhouse and House of Refuge and Correction Records, 1855-1950* consist of correspondence, minutes of the Workhouse Board of Directors, registers, time books, daily records, payroll books, invoices, financial statements, cash books inventories, balance books, and medical records. Though principally related to the administration and functions of the Workhouse, certain records relate to allied organizations, including the City Infirmary and the Department of Outdoor Relief.

The records, arranged in six series, are maintained partially on microfilm and partially in original form. All materials in Series I through III are available only on this micropublication. The original records were deaccessioned in 1983 because of their deteriorated condition. Other series are available in original form only.

**Series I, Minutes of the Workhouse Board of Directors**, contains the records of applications by prisoners and their families for pardon or parole. The minutes are arranged chronologically.

**Series II, Inmate Records**, consists of registers of paupers, prisoners, visitors, deaths, patients at the City Infirmary, time books for male and female prisoners, daily records and reports, and medical records. The records, arranged by type and then chronologically, contain a variety of information such as the name of a prisoner, his or her date of admission, nationality, offense, and sentence.

**Series III, Operational Records**, consists of financial statements, balance books, employees time and payroll books, invoices, and inventories. The series is arranged by record type and then chronologically.

The *Cleveland Workhouse and House of Refuge and Correction Records* provide valuable insight into the internal and external workings of a prison in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The registers and case file cards contain valuable statistical and genealogical information such as name, age, sex, work assignment, religion, and occasionally address, names and addresses of relatives, date and reason for committal and release, race, and national origin. The financial records and the time books of the prisoners provide details on the Workhouse chair and brush businesses. Those records of the Outdoor Relief Department (Series III) provide information on the function of a governmental relief agency in the early years of the twentieth century. These files also relate to the Outdoor Relief Department's relations with private charitable organizations such as the Associated Charities of Cleveland.



# Roll Contents

**Roll Volume  
No. No.**

## **Series I: Minutes of the Workhouse Board of Directors**

- 1 1 Minutes of the Workhouse Board of Directors  
March 1875, March 1876, January 1880-  
June 1887

## **Series II: Inmate Records**

- 2 Register, City Infirmary, December 1855-  
May 1867
- 3 —, workhouse prisoners, March 1871-  
January 1873
- 4 —, workhouse prisoners, August 1872-  
November 1879
- 2 5 Register, paupers, 1872-1882
- 6 —, workhouse prisoners, March 1876-  
July 1877
- 7 —, workhouse prisoners, July 1877-  
December 1879
- 8 —, workhouse prisoners, July 1877-  
December 1881
- 9 —, workhouse prisoners, July 1877,  
October 1877
- 10 —, workhouse prisoners, October 1877-  
March 1878
- 11 —, workhouse prisoners, December 1878-  
April 1879

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| 3 | 12 | Register, workhouse visitors, May 1879-<br>July 1881            |
|   | 13 | —, workhouse prisoners, November 1879-<br>September 1885        |
| 4 | 14 | Register, workhouse prisoners, January 1882-<br>April 1886      |
|   | 15 | —, workhouse prisoners, February 1883-<br>July 1885             |
|   | 16 | —, workhouse visitors, December 1884-<br>April 1890             |
|   | 17 | —, workhouse prisoners, June 1885-<br>May 1889                  |
| 5 | 18 | Register, workhouse prisoners,<br>September 1885-September 1889 |
|   | 19 | —, workhouse prisoners, March 1886-<br>June 1889                |
|   | 20 | —, workhouse prisoners, May 1888-<br>June 1892                  |
| 6 | 21 | Register, workhouse prisoners, May 1889-<br>December 1891       |
|   | 22 | —, workhouse prisoners, January 1890-<br>December 1890          |
|   | 23 | —, workhouse visitors, April 1890-<br>February 1893             |
|   | 24 | —, workhouse deaths, May 1890-<br>January 1898                  |

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| 6 | 25 | —, workhouse prisoners, January 1892-September 1892     |
|   | 26 | —, workhouse prisoners, January 1892-December 1892      |
|   | 27 | —, workhouse prisoners, February 1892-November 1892     |
|   | 28 | —, workhouse prisoners, February 1892                   |
|   | 29 | —, workhouse prisoners, January 1893-December 1893      |
| 7 | 30 | Register, workhouse prisoners, August 1894-May 1895     |
|   | 31 | —, workhouse prisoners, January 1895-October 1897       |
|   | 32 | —, workhouse prisoners, August 1901-December 1902       |
|   | 33 | —, workhouse prisoners, February 1904-April 1905        |
|   | 35 | —, workhouse prisoners, March 1906-April 1907           |
| 8 | 36 | Register, workhouse prisoners, March 1907-December 1912 |
|   | 37 | —, workhouse prisoners, April 1907-July 1908            |
|   | 38 | —, workhouse prisoners, September 1909-September 1910   |
|   | 39 | —, workhouse prisoners, 1909                            |

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- 8    40    —, workhouse prisoners, January 1913-  
December 1913
- 41    Register, workhouse prisoners, January 1919-  
June 1919
- 42    —, workhouse prisoners, January 1920-  
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- 9    43    Register, workhouse prisoners, January 1921-  
December 1921
- 44    —, workhouse prisoners, January 1922-  
December 1922
- 10   45    Register, workhouse prisoners, January 1924-  
December 1924
- 46    Time book, female prisoners, February 1873-  
October 1873
- 47    —, male prisoners, February 1873-  
October 1873
- 48    —, male prisoners, November 1873-  
April 1876
- 49    —, male prisoners, January 1874-March 1874
- 50    —, male prisoners, May 1874-  
September 1874
- 51    —, male prisoners, May 1874-November 1874
- 52    —, male prisoners, October 1874-  
January 1875
- 53    —, male prisoners, December 1874-  
March 1875
- 54    —, male prisoners, January 1875-May 1875
- 55    —, female prisoners, January 1877-July 1877

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- 11 56 Time book, female prisoners, August 1877-  
January 1878
- 57 —, male prisoners, September 1878-  
October 1878
- 58 —, male prisoners, June 1882-  
November 1882
- 59 —, female prisoners, June 1883-January 1884
- 60 —, female prisoners, February 1884-  
August 1885
- 61 —, male prisoners, January 1886-April 1886
- 62 —, female prisoners, November 1886-  
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- 63 Time book, male prisoners, January 1888-  
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- 64 —, male prisoners, November 1888-  
February 1889
- 65 —, male and female prisoners, January 1892-  
September 1892
- 66 —, male and female prisoners, October 1892-  
June 1893
- 67 —, male prisoners, July 1892-November 1892
- 68 —, male prisoners, December 1892-March 1893
- 69 —, male prisoners, April 1893-June 1893
- 70 —, male prisoners, November 1893-  
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| 12 | 73 | Time book, male prisoners, January 1896-October 1896                    |
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| 13 | 80 | Daily reports, admitted and discharged, June 1877-September 1878        |
|    | 81 | —, admitted and discharged, January 1878-October 1885                   |
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|    | 83 | —, events, October 1889-December 1894                                   |
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| 17 | 90  | Balance book, January 1878-December 1886                       |
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|    | 93  | —, January 1894-December 1898                                  |
| 19 | 94  | Balance book, January 1895-December 1897                       |
|    | 95  | Daily journal, workhouse, January 1873-<br>March 1877          |
| 20 | 96  | Daily journal, House of Refuge, January 1876-<br>December 1884 |
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|    | 98  | —, Workhouse, February 1882-February 1886                      |
| 21 | 99  | Cashbook, fines, June 1873-September 1884                      |
|    | 100 | —, fines, October 1884-December 1892                           |
|    | 101 | —, advances, October 1884-August 1895                          |
| 22 | 102 | Employees, payroll book, September 1872-<br>November 1878      |
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|    | 105 | —, payroll book, June 1904-December 1904                       |
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- 22 107 —, payroll book, January 1906-December 1906  
108 —, payroll book, January 1910-August 1912  
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and unclaimed prisoners' funds, 1910-1911)
- 23 109 Employees, time book, January 4, 1907,  
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110 Invoices, prisoners room and board,  
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111 —, prisoners room and board, June 1910-  
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- 24 112 Inventory, supplies issued for Outdoor Relief,  
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