

Board of Inspectors of the Western State Penitentiary State Documents

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Finding aid written in English

Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of the State Library

Forum Building
607 South Drive
Harrisburg, PA, 17120

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Summary Information

Repository: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of the State Library
Creator: State Penitentiary for the Western District of Pennsylvania. Board of Inspectors
Title: Board of Inspectors of the Western State Penitentiary State Documents
Identifier: INS-WSP
Date: 1826 - 2017
Date: Majority of material found within 1839 - 1919

Physical Description: 72 Megabytes (48 PDF files)

Language of Materials: English

Scope and Contents

The Board of Inspectors of the Western State Penitentiary was created to oversee the administration and conditions of the correctional institution, and to ensure that penal law was being upheld. The Board was responsible for reporting to the Governor and General Assembly of Pennsylvania the annual review, including prison statistics, improvements, and happenings.

The publications of the Board of Inspectors of the Western State Penitentiary contain annual reports. Selected topics from these publications include yearly prison happenings and statistics. The bulk of the current material is dated from 1839 to 1919.

Biographical / Historical

Pennsylvania's oldest operating correctional institution, the Western State Penitentiary at Pittsburgh opened in 1826. The original building was designed by architect William Strickland (1788-1854) and was razed within seven years because experience revealed the individual cells to be too small. Moved in 1882, the new facility known as Riverside is located on twenty-one acres of land and encloses approximately twelve acres inside the perimeter wall. A new maximum security Western State Penitentiary was opened at Rockview in Centre County in 1912 and the first execution by electric chair occurred there in 1915. Originally named the New Central Penitentiary at Bellefonte, the latter facility was reclassified as a medium security prison during the 1920s. After a period of transitioning prisoners away from the facility, it was closed by Governor Wolf in 2017.

Legacy Agency Names and Related Agencies

Department of Welfare (former parent)

General

Annual reports of the Inspectors of the Western State Penitentiary from 1850 to 1851 are available on the Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/search?query=report+western+state+penitentiary+pennsylvania>.

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Controlled Access Headings

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