



*New York State Archives*

**Elmira Reformatory Guard House Book B1863**

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New York State Archives  
222 Madison Avenue  
Albany, NY 12230  
[archref@nysed.gov](mailto:archref@nysed.gov)  
URL: <http://www.archives.nysed.gov/>

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## Overview of the Records

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<b>Repository:</b>	New York State Archives
<b>Summary:</b>	This series documents the disciplinary movement of incarcerated individuals into and out of the institution's guardhouse where they were confined in isolation. Entries include consecutive number, surname of the incarcerated individual, date received in guard house, name of receiving officer, date released from guard house, and name of physician for daily visit. In some instances, remarks such as "sent to hospital" or reduced "to 3rd grade," (loss of privileges and temporary ineligibility for parole) are recorded.
<b>Creator:</b>	Elmira Reformatory
<b>Title:</b>	Guard house book
<b>Quantity:</b>	0.2 cubic feet
<b>Quantity:</b>	(1 volume).
<b>Inclusive Date:</b>	1927-1933
<b>Series:</b>	B1863

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## Arrangement

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Chronological.

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## Administrative History

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In 1894, investigations undertaken by the State Board of Charities and the Commission to Hear Charges against Managers of the New York State Reformatory at Elmira revealed that order was maintained at the institution largely through the threat and imposition of severe corporal punishment. In an 1899 opinion, the State Attorney General declared that an 1847 act "for the better regulation of the county and State prisons of the State, and consolidating and amending the existing laws in relation thereto" applied to all penal institutions in New York State. The act

(Chapter 460) banned corporal punishment and stipulated that solitary confinement in a cell upon short rations was the means to be employed in cases where it was deemed necessary to "inflict unusual punishment in order to produce the entire submission or obedience of any prisoner."

Given the nature and purposes of the State Reformatory at Elmira and the legislative acts creating and continuing it, the Attorney General reasoned, it was apparent that the institution was a State prison and was subject to the provisions of general legislation governing such institutions. Shortly thereafter, solitary confinement replaced corporal punishment as the officially sanctioned means of disciplining incarcerated individuals and maintaining order. By virtue of Chapter 378 of the Laws of 1900, physicians of reformatories were required to examine on a daily basis, "and as often as required by the superintendent," all prisoners undergoing punishment by solitary confinement. In addition, physicians were to "prescribe the allowance of food to each prisoner so confined."

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## Scope and Content Note

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This volume was used to record the disciplinary movement of incarcerated individuals into and out of the institution's guard house. These individuals were confined in the guard house, in isolation, for periods typically ranging from less than twenty-four hours to several days. Each entry in the volume includes consecutive number, the surname of the incarcerated individual, date received in guard house, name of receiving officer, date released from guard house, and name of physician visiting in accordance with State law. In some instances, additional remarks are recorded such as "sent to hospital" or reduced "to 3rd grade," the latter indicating loss of privileges and temporary ineligibility for parole.

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## Use of Records

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### Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of the material.

## Administrative Information

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### Custodial History

Elmira Correctional Facility transferred this volume to the State Archives at an unknown date. The volume was accessioned in conjunction with a project undertaken by Archives staff in 2004 to describe or integrate estrayed or unidentified records.

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## Access Terms

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- Registers (Lists)
- Prison administration--New York (State)
- Prison discipline--New York (State)
- Correctional institutions
- Administering prisons
- New York (State)
- Reformatories--New York (State)
- Guardhouses
- Elmira Correctional Facility
- New York (State). Department of Correctional Services