

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

THEME: Social, Humanitarian Movements, Prison Reform.

Form 10-300 (Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE: Pennsylvania
COUNTY: Philadelphia
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK) (Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:	Eastern State Penitentiary
AND/OR HISTORIC:	Eastern State Penitentiary

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 21st Street and Fairmount Avenue			
CITY OR TOWN: Philadelphia		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 3	
STATE: Pennsylvania	CODE: 42	COUNTY: Philadelphia	CODE: 101

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Comments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Used by Philadelphia City Police.</u>

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Corrections	STATE: Pennsylvania
STREET AND NUMBER: Box 598	
CITY OR TOWN: Camp Hill	
STATE: Pennsylvania	
CODE: 42	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Department of Records	STATE: Pennsylvania
STREET AND NUMBER: City Hall	
CITY OR TOWN: Philadelphia	
STATE: Pennsylvania	
CODE: 42	

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey	STATE: D.C.
DATE OF SURVEY: N.A. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local	
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress/Annex	
STREET AND NUMBER: Division of Prints and Photographs	
CITY OR TOWN:	
CODE: 11	

STATE: Pennsylvania
COUNTY: Philadelphia
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The exterior of the Eastern State Penitentiary is composed of a rectangle of 30' high walls of hewn and squared granite, which taper in thickness from 12' at their bases to 2.75' at their tops. At each of the four corners is a projecting tower and in the center of the southern facade are three more towers comprising the main entrance and original administration building. This main building, pierced through the middle by the gateway, is 200' long, and has at its eastern and western termini two 50' towers crowned with projecting parapets and battlements. The gateway which is located centrally between the two towers was formerly 27' tall and 15' wide, and filled with a massive wrought-iron portcullis and double oaken doors studded with projecting iron rivets. This entrance has been altered by an extension to house the electric gates installed in 1938. Inside the facade wall, surmounting the entranceway is the octagonal tower which formerly contained the alarm bell and clock. On each side of the entrance way are apartments on the basement and first and second floor levels. These several rooms used to contain the laundry, kitchen and bakery in the basements, the keeps' quarters and store rooms on the first floors, and the warden's quarters, the office of the Board of Inspectors, and the infirmary and hospital on the second floors. In the central tower was housed the apothecary shop. Formerly, one could walk directly from the entrance gate to the octagonal central building, but now one must pass through a cluster of later additions. In this center building 40' in diameter, the general guard house was kept in the basement. On the ground floor, where standing at one point one could view each of the cell blocks, were the accommodations for the under-keeper and watchman. On the second floor was the library, and on the outside, a watch-platform. Above this was the cupola, also occupied by the watch.

When construction of the prison was begun, the proposed occupancy was 250. Consequently, the first three cellblocks that Haviland had built were single-storied with 38 cells, 12' by 8' by 10', divided by a central corridor. Each cell had one door which opened onto an enclosed exercise yard 18' long. The only opening on the interior was a food hatch which converted into a table, and a one-way peephole for the guards. Each cell also had a convex reflector known as a "deadeye" to provide light and ventilation. However, after the first three blocks were completed, the proposed occupancy was expanded to 400, with the result that the next four blocks were double-storied. The second story of course had no exercise yards, but the cells were doubled in size to compensate. The cells were provided with interior doors in 1831, to facilitate administration. The remaining open land was under cultivation. The prison retained this appearance until 1877-79 when three new cellblocks were built between the originals. In 1894 an eleventh was added, and in 1908-1911, the twelfth block was erected. During this extended period of construction, the exercise yards were eliminated and replaced by machine shops, and boiler rooms. When the prison was finally closed, the total number of blocks was fourteen, accommodating 900 prisoners. At this stage, the prison grounds were severely cramped.

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1829-1913**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Military		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is the prime exponent of the Pennsylvania system of imprisonment, a system which was of limited influence in the United States, but was studied and applied widely in Europe and South America. This system, developed primarily by the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, founded in 1787, was grounded in the Quaker concept of reflection in solitude as well as an abhorrence of the 18th century practice in Philadelphia of sentencing all offenders to public hard labor. In 1821, the state legislature appointed a building commission to oversee the construction of a 250-cell prison, based on the principle of solitary confinement. After a public competition for the design of the prison, won by John Haviland, in 1823, the cornerstone was laid. Haviland's plan called for seven cellblocks radiating out of a common center, all enclosed by massive stone walls resembling medieval battlements. Each solitary cell had its own exercise yard and its own ventilation and lighting vent representing great improvements over previous prison facilities. The first prisoner was admitted in 1829, and for the next 85 years, with many enlargements and additions, the prison implemented the system of solitary confinement. In 1913 the system was abolished, and some 50 years later the penitentiary was closed. Today, it still stands at 21st and Fairmount Avenue, presenting much the same appearance as did in 1829.

History

The Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, which was built to apply the Pennsylvania System of imprisonment, served as a model for numerous other prisons throughout the world. Although of limited influence in the United States, the prison and the Pennsylvania System influenced, and continue to influence, penological practices in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

The Pennsylvania System, which development led to the construction of the Eastern State Penitentiary, resulted from a movement in Pennsylvania after the American Revolution to improve conditions in prisons. Prominent in the struggle to end the barbaric treatment of prisoners were Dr. Benjamin Rush, and the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, which was founded on May 8, 1787. Influenced somewhat by certain

(continued)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Harry E. Barnes, The Evolution of Penology in Pennsylvania, (Indianapolis, 1927), pp. 1-2, 118, 141-143, 158-162.
 Negley K. Teeters and John D. Shearer, The Prison at Philadelphia, Cherry Hill (New York, 1957), pp. 3-5, 17-19, 36, 41, 51, 54, 56-57, 59, 63, 65-69, 73, 78-79, 114, 133-134, 141-144, 149.
 Norman B. Johnston, "John Haviland, Jailor to the World," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XXIII (May 1965), pp. 101-105.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY		OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES	
CORNER	UTM		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
NW	18.485110.4424140		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NE	18.485320.4424130		0 ' "	0 ' "
SE	18.485310.4423910			
SW	18.485110.4423910			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **14.5**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Richard E. Greenwood, Survey Historian, Landmark Review Project, National Survey Form 10-317 dated 3/15/65, submitted by S. Sydney Bradford, in conjunction with**

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service** DATE: **8/6/74**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L Street NW**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **11**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Name _____

Title _____

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Landmark **June 23, 1965**

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Boundary Certified: **20-75**

Date **7/2/75**

ATTEST: **Chief, Dist. & Arch. Surveys**

Boundary Affirmed: **7/2/75**

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____ Director, OAHIP date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Pennsylvania	
COUNTY	
Philadelphia	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1) Eastern State Penitentiary

The prison is today unchanged structurally from its last period of use in 1970. The buildings have been without heat for two years, and the interior paint is flaking heavily. Aside from this and the general detritus that accumulates upon abandonment the prison is sound and stable.

Boundaries of the Eastern State Penitentiary

Beginning at the NE intersection of 22nd Street and Fairmount Avenue, proceed N approximately 750' along the Western wall, thence E at the NW corner of the prison, approximately 670' along the Northern wall to the NE corner of the prison, thence S approximately 750' along the Eastern wall to the NW intersection of Corinthian Street and Fairmount Avenue, thence approximately 670' W to the point of origin. These boundaries enclose the prison, and its main entrance.

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COUNTY	Philadelphia	
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(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance: (1) Eastern State Penitentiary

prison methods in Europe, the Society, nevertheless, largely developed on its own the idea that became the heart of the Pennsylvania System, solitary confinement. As early as April 1790, the Society succeeded in persuading the Commonwealth's legislature to provide for solitary confinement cells at the Walnut Street Prison. The cells were constructed, but the great number of prisoners in the jail prevented the rigid application of solitary confinement. Moreover, the other important aspect of the Pennsylvania System, that the prisoners should work, never was applied. Despite the setback at the Walnut Street Prison, the Society continued to press for the broad adoption of its plan, and in 1801 memorialized the legislature to build a prison that would be based on solitary confinement. Some 20 years later, the legislators finally appropriated \$100,000 for the erection of a prison at Philadelphia based on the idea of solitary confinement. No provision was made at first apropos the idea that the inmates should work, but the legislature had accepted that idea by April 1829, just before the first prisoner entered the new prison.

The commission responsible for constructing the prison realized that the philosophy behind its erection, solitary confinement, demanded a new design. A competition was held, and John Haviland, already a successful architect, won the \$100 premium when his design was selected on May 24, 1822. Perhaps the plan for the prison's exterior stimulated the commission to choose Haviland's design, for the architect's drawing of the exterior certainly reflected the commission's requirement that

The exterior of a solitary prison should exhibit as much as possible great strength and convey to the mind a cheerless blank indicative of the misery that awaits the unhappy being who enters within its walls.¹

It was within the interior, however, that Haviland's design achieved real significance. He provided for a central rotunda from which radiated seven cell blocks, each block containing solitary confinement cells. Even if Haviland had been influenced by some radial prison designs in Europe, the English-born architect gave that concept its fullest and best realization. Furthermore, in his design, Haviland provided notable improvements in light, heat, ventilation, and space in the cells. All in all, Haviland's design represents an excellent example of the architectural application of a philosophical point of view and it is not strange that his prison was to be widely copied, especially, as it was far in advance of the usual prison of his time.

¹

Quoted by Negley K. Teeters and John D. Shearer, The Prison at Philadelphia, (New York, 1957), p. 59.

(continued)

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Pennsylvania	
COUNTY Philadelphia	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance: (2) Eastern State Penitentiary

The cornerstone was placed on May 22, 1823, and the first prisoner was admitted on October 25, 1829. Previous to the laying of the cornerstone, the commission had selected a site of a little over 10 acres in size about two and a half miles northwest of City Hall. As construction proceeded, the great front wall arose, 30 feet high, 12 feet thick at the base, and 670 feet long. In the center, was the main administration building, dominated by two fifty-foot towers. Behind the forbidding front arose the cell blocks. The first cell blocks were one-story and held 38 cells each. Subsequently, as a result of increasing the capacity of the prison from 250 to 400, the remaining four cell blocks each had two-stories. When fully completed, the prison had cost a total of \$772,600.

Once completed, the prison epitomized the Pennsylvania System. Individual cells existed for each prisoner, the rooms measuring 12 feet long, 8 feet wide, and 10 feet high, and each had an unroofed exercise yard attached to it. Every effort was made by the staff to enforce the solitary aspect, especially when prisoners were in the exercise yards. Moreover, a prisoner had to wear a mask or hood when out of his cell. This practice existed until 1904. The other aspect of the system, work, was also applied from the opening of the prison. Labor, it was hoped, would teach the prisoners trades and the products of the work would help pay the expense of the operation of the prison. Shoe-making and weaving became the basic labor activities and remained so, until an act of the Commonwealth in 1897, the result of free labor's opposition, put all but an end to such work in prison.

From the first, those responsible for the Eastern State Penitentiary spoke and wrote glowingly of the success of the Pennsylvania System. Nevertheless, a public investigation of the prison in 1834-35 proved that the system lacked perfection, and that the guards had already turned to time-honored methods of enforcing discipline.

In addition, due to the prison's elevation, there was a chronic deficiency in the water supply. Similarly, once the commission decided to omit Haviland's proposed central heating system, the prison was plagued by a succession of inefficient heating methods. Despite such troubles, the fame of the prison and the system grew during the 19th century, resulting in generally improved treatment of prisoners throughout the world. Surprisingly, in the United States, it was an alternate penal system that was overwhelmingly adopted, the congregate system. This regimen, exemplified at the penitentiary at Ossining, New York, called for the prisoners working in groups, but under strict silence. Thus, when the Pennsylvania system was abolished at Eastern State Penitentiary, the system passed out of practice in the United States.

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PENNSYLVANIA-NEW JERSEY
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