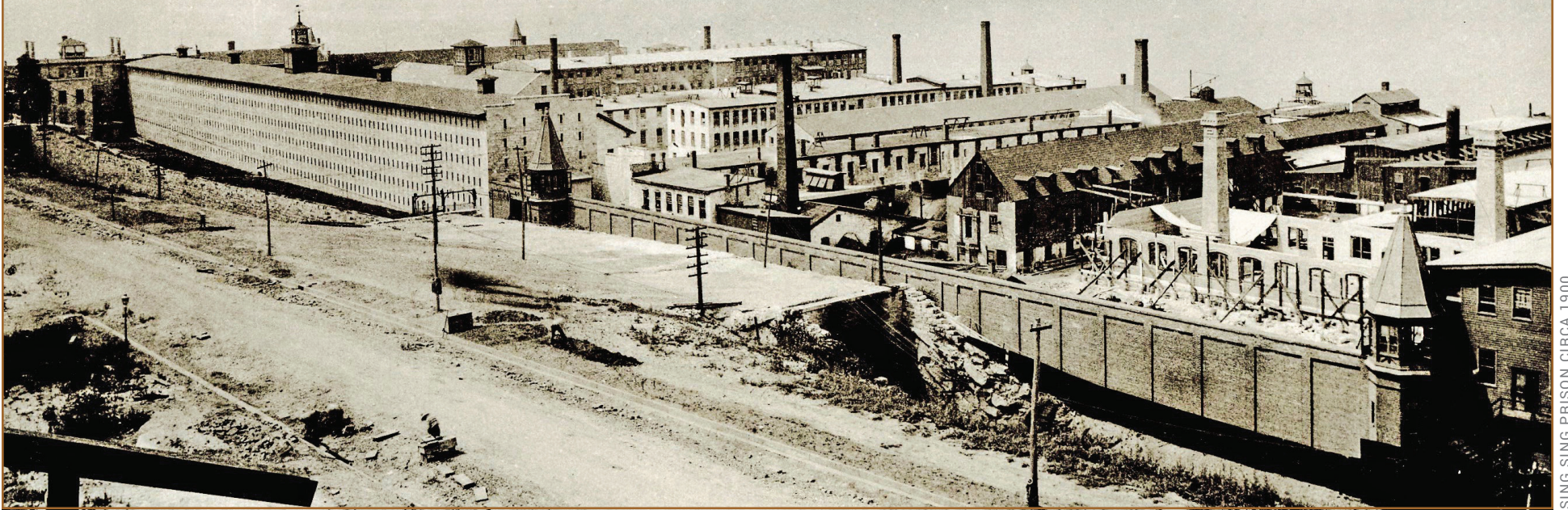




Sing Sing Prison: *A Brief History*



SING SING PRISON CIRCA 1900

Sing Sing Correctional facility is one of the oldest working prisons in the country. The village of Sing Sing, now Ossining, was incorporated in 1813. In 1825, construction on the prison began. The histories of prison and village have been long entwined.

In the spring of 1825, 100 convicts and their overseers arrived by boat on the shores of Sing Sing village to build a new prison. They used limestone quarried from the rocky hills behind them. The first level was done in six months, and they were locked inside, let out to continue working. Originally designed to be four stories, the cellblock was ultimately six.

The new prison, called Mount Pleasant State Prison, replaced Newgate Prison in Greenwich Village. Most of the prison's inhabitants would come from New York City.

The cellblock, which was 476 feet long and only 44 feet wide, was unlike any ever built in the world, and contained 1,200 tiny cells. The prison followed the Auburn Method, where convicts were kept alone in cells but let out to work during the day, in silence, wearing striped suits and marching in lockstep. They were punished harshly for any infraction, including talking, usually with a cat-o'-nine-tails, which was legal for discipline until 1840.

Other methods were invented for punishment, some quite medieval.

In addition to quarrying stone, the convicts were put to work in factories on the property making all sorts of goods for the open market. After complaints from unions and local businessmen this practice was curtailed in the early 20th century, though they continued making items for the state.

Today, Sing Sing is the only state prison that does not have a manufacturing capacity.

The prison's name was changed to Sing Sing, after the village. Because the prison had no wall and a railway running through it, escapes were commonplace. The electric chair arrived in 1891, and ten years later, the village changed its name to Ossining to separate itself from the prison, though it didn't really work.

For a few years in the 1970s and 80s, the prison's name was changed to Ossining Correctional Facility.

The 20th century forged the prison we know today. Reformers like Warden Thomas Mott Osborne created the Mutual Welfare League, a system of convict self-governance, and Lewis Lawes continued and broadened these reforms. Though he did not believe in capital punishment, he presided over many executions. Ultimately,

614 people, including eight women, would be put to death in the electric chair from 1891 to 1963.

A celebrity in his own right, Lawes was a prolific author, and his books about the prison helped shape the public perception of the place. Warner Bros., among others, made so many gangster films on the property they built a new gym for the inmates as thanks. Lawes also oversaw the rebuilding of a new prison on the east side of the tracks in the 1920s. This is the prison we know today.

Though the prison's presence in the village has diminished, its mission has evolved. Today, Sing Sing Correctional Facility is the most progressive of New York's state prisons. With the help of local nonprofits such as Hudson Link and Rehabilitation Through the Arts, inmates can earn college degrees and perform Shakespeare. A group of inmates even staged a TEDx talk in 2014.

Most of the 1,700 inmates in Sing Sing will return to their communities. As Superintendent Michael Capra puts it, "I spend many hours thinking about putting 1,700 broken pieces back together so when they leave this place they will be prepared to be productive, educated, confident, employed, crime-free people." —by Dana White

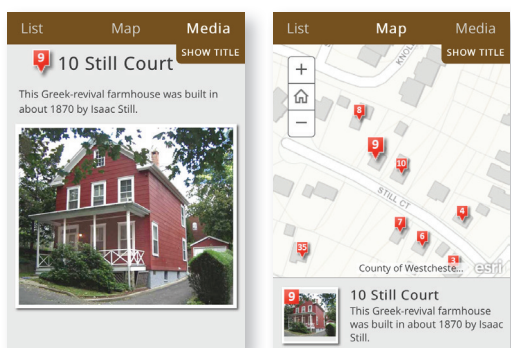
Mark Your Calendars!

Pick a Sunday for **Sparta's Walking Tour** with Dr. Alan Stahl, Sparta resident and past president of the Jug Tavern of Sparta. Come to the Jug, see the video "The Battle for Sparta," and set off on a 6-block tour of the historic district. The tours start at 1:00 pm on the following **Sundays: May 21, June 11, August 13, September 10, October 15.** For more information and to reserve a spot, go to www.jugtavern.org.



June 10: Come visit our booth at the **Ossining Village Fair** on Saturday, June 10.

October 21: American Roots Music
Back by popular demand, **Tim Rowell** and **Ambrose Verdibello** will return on Saturday October 21, for two shows. If you missed it last year, mark your calendars now (and get your reservation in early) for a wonderful program of traditional American folk music.



New Historic Tour App

Have you ever found yourself in the neighborhood and wondering about when a certain house was built? **Now there's an app for that.** Thanks to Tony Ierulli, Jug Tavern board member, our self-guided walking tour of Sparta is available as an app on your mobile device. Using the cloud-based mapping platform ArcGIS Online, the Historic Sparta Walking Tour can be in the palm of your hand. It includes an interactive map, photos of each of the 37 properties, and a short description of the history of the house. Just visit www.jugtavern.org on your device, click on the map in the yellow box, and you're good to go!



TOP: Calvary Chapel of the Sing Sing Presbyterian Church, ca. 1900. BOTTOM LEFT: Sparta School House at corner of Fairview Place and Spring Street, with Calvary Chapel at top of Fairview, ca. 1900. BOTTOM CENTER AND RIGHT: Summer and winter views of 11 Fairview Place today.

PROPERTY PROFILE: *11 Fairview Place*

Like many young (or in our case middle-aged) New York apartment dwellers looking for their dream house outside the city, we had a long list of requirements and an even longer list of fantasies. Somewhere in the latter was the romantic idea of living in a converted church, with soaring ceilings, lots of stone and old wood, and large spaces for entertaining and simply avoiding the claustrophobic feeling of the Washington Heights apartment in which we'd spent the better part of two decades. In the winter of 1996, on our first day house hunting in the river towns of Westchester, we picked up a real estate brochure on a cigarette machine in a diner (how times have changed), that featured a converted church for sale in the Sparta section of Ossining. It was well above our budget but within what realtors call an aspirational price range. We fell in love with it, and spent the next five months viewing over a hundred houses that did not measure up, while our budget expanded and the sellers' asking price decreased. We named the house *Mistra*, in recollection of the Byzantine fortress and church on a hill above Sparta, Greece. In the twenty years we've been here, we have had many challenges, but no moment of regret.

The Calvary Presbyterian Chapel was an outgrowth of the Presbyterian Church of Sing Sing,

which itself had its origins in Sparta in the 1760s. After the main church moved to Highland Avenue, religious services were held at the Sparta School on the corner Spring Street and Fairview Place, just south of the marble and lime quarry. In 1889, the Presbyterian Church built a chapel in Sparta up the hill from the school in a rustic style of unhewn river rock, a major departure from the grand style of its Gothic church built in Ossining in 1870 and the Italianate baroque Scarborough Presbyterian Church built in 1893. Friday evening prayer services and Sunday School were held in the building for about two decades, along with sewing classes and strawberry festivals; the chapel was closed in 1918 because of declining attendance. It was converted to a private home five years later, and for the past century has undergone successive renovations by a series of owners who turned it into the magnificent, if idiosyncratic home it is today.

As far as we can tell, the first renovation comprised raising the level of most of the ground floor, probably to allow the living areas a view out the windows that was no doubt not considered important during its life as a place of worship. Windows were pierced into the front of the roof to let light into the choir loft, and a door was opened on the east side of the front. At some point the small front porch of the main entrance

was enclosed and, in the 1950s, the rotting wooden parts of the bell tower were removed and windows were added to turn it into a small bedroom (which has housed eight high-school exchange students in recent years). The primary residents of the twentieth century were members of the Van Gorp family; when the elder generation ceded the main part of their house to their daughter Margaret Kasinitz and her family, they moved upstairs in the back and opened up a north-facing skylight to provide light for their painting and other artistic pursuits.

In our years in the house, we have redone the kitchen and two of the bathrooms and are embarking on a renovation of the third bathroom. To our regret, we have had to replace the slate roof with one of modern materials, a bow to financial reality. We have opened the house annually to holiday parties of the Sparta community and to the periodic Historic Sparta Walking Tours, which Alan leads. It has also served as a political center during Bill's tenure as Trustee and then for eight years Mayor of the Village of Ossining. Mainly, it serves as a non-conventional but wonderful home for our non-conventional and constantly changing family.

—Bill Hanauer and Alan Stabl