

Wisconsin School for Girls Inmate Record Books: A Case Study of Redacted Digitization

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ABSTRACT

The Wisconsin School for Girls collection housed in the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) archives contains a variety of documents from the institution's period of operation. Inmates who were admitted to the institution were predominately juvenile females at the time of the records' creation; because of this, the contents of the records are protected by Wisconsin state statutes, which mandate restricted access for patrons as well as limitations on the use of the information contained within the records. This article examines how the restrictions on the collection continue to protect the privacy of the inmates and their descendants, what procedures WHS has in place to ensure continued trust in their custodianship, why a repository like WHS would value a collection with access restrictions, and who the primary patron group of this collection might be. Finally, this article argues that redacted digital representations of a limited number of the institution's records (with an option for patrons to assume the cost of redaction and digitization of further records) and the use of an online user agreement form to access the collection are viable means for WHS to digitize this collection and open it to researchers while still preserving public trust in its custodianship.

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KEY WORDS

Medical records, Digitization, Redaction, Privacy, Juvenile records,
Confidentiality

On May 25, 1925, record 3648 was created about an eleven-year-old girl entering the Wisconsin Industrial School. The reason for the girl's incarceration was given as "Delinquent and Incurable" behavior; she became a ward of the institution until the age of twenty-one. Her admission record contains personal information about her family, including that her parents prostituted her and her nine-year-old sister to boarders and that eleven men were sent to prison as a result of the sisters' testimony of their experiences. Also included in the record is information about the physical state of the girls when they entered the institution and a newspaper clipping describing the terror the sisters felt about being admitted there.¹

The Wisconsin School for Girls collection housed in the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) archives contains a variety of documents from the institution's period of operation, including many records like the aforementioned. Inmates who were admitted to the institution were all juveniles and predominately female; because of their juvenile status, the contents of the records are protected by Wisconsin state statutes and federal laws mandating restricted access to patrons as well as limitations on the use of the information contained within the records. This article examines how restrictions on the collection continue to protect the privacy of the inmates and their descendants, what procedures WHS has in place to ensure continued trust in their custodianship, why a repository like WHS would value a collection with access restrictions, and who the primary patron group of this collection might be. Finally, this article argues that redacted digitization of a sample of this collection and the use of an online user agreement form to access the collection make it viable for WHS to digitize and open this collection to researchers while still preserving public trust in its custodianship.

Background on the Wisconsin School for Girls Record Series

In 1875, a group of Wisconsin women concerned with the impropriety of girls and boys being housed together in correctional facilities opened the Milwaukee Industrial School, a private institution for delinquent and orphaned girls and very young boys.² In March 1876, the Wisconsin Industrial School was appropriated \$1,000 "for the maintenance of the children kept and maintained therein" and two years later was renamed Wisconsin Industrial School for Girls.³ Chapter 486 of the Wisconsin Laws of 1917 officially made the institution a state-funded and -vested organization overseen by the State Board of Control. In 1939, supervision of the institution was transferred to the State Department of Public Welfare's Division of Corrections, and, in 1941, the institution was moved from Milwaukee to Oregon, Wisconsin, where, in 1945, the name was changed to the School for Girls. In 1967, the Department of Health and Social

Services absorbed the institution. At the end of the institution's operation, it once again briefly became a coeducational facility in August of 1972, only to be discontinued in July of 1976 when the Oregon site was repurposed as an adult detention center. The juvenile inmates at the School for Girls were transferred to the Mendota Mental Health Institute initially and later to the coeducational Lincoln Hills facility.⁴

This article limits its scope to inmate record books. Series 1383 contains thirteen volumes dated 1924 to 1926 when the institution was known as the Wisconsin Industrial School for Girls. On average during these years, 34 employees supervised 240 female inmates.⁵ In a *Report of the State Board of Control* about the Wisconsin Industrial School, the superintendent outlined the criteria for and expectations of a girl admitted to this institution. For a girl to become an inmate of the school, she had to be under eighteen years of age, found to be guilty of a crime, or deemed "incurable."⁶ Once a girl was committed, she was a ward of the state until she turned twenty-one. Inmates had the opportunity to earn parole, which on average took a year and a half to two years.⁷

The primary institutional use of the inmate record books from series 1383 was to document the reasons for the girls' incarcerations, their physical and mental health upon arrival at the institution, and their familial and social backgrounds.⁸ For each incoming inmate, most of the following fields in the record books were completed:⁹

- Name and age of admitted girl
- Who delivered the girl to the institution and who paid for her incarceration¹⁰
- What court or authority committed the girl to the institution
- The length of the girl's incarceration and the reason for commitment¹¹
- A brief history of the girl's family, including a list of family members and their ages¹²
- Personal history of the girl¹³
- Previous education¹⁴
- "Real" cause of being placed at the school¹⁵
- Physical description of the girl and condition in which she arrived at the institution, including results of medical tests¹⁶
- Religious preference and nationality
- Remarks from the record maker¹⁷
- Subsequent history¹⁸

The record categories and the routine way in which the records were created provide informational value concerning the inmates but also document what the school regarded as important data about new girls upon their admissions.¹⁹

State-Mandated Records Retention and Restricted Access

As the State Archives, WHS is responsible for caring for selected state records, including those from defunct institutions like the Wisconsin School for Girls. Wisconsin Statute 16.61, Records of State Offices and Other Public Records, dictates that records deemed important by the state should be preserved and managed.²⁰ The Public Records Board oversees the care and disposal of state-created records through retention schedules, and written approval must be obtained from the board before records can be destroyed.²¹ According to State Statute 16.61 (4c), “A records retention schedule approved by the board on or after March 17, 1988, is effective for 10 years, unless otherwise specified by the board. At the end of the effective period, an agency shall resubmit a retention schedule for approval by the board. During the effective period, if approved by the board and the board have assigned a disposal authorization number to the public record or record series, a state agency may dispose of a public record or record series according to the disposition requirements of the schedule without further approval by the board.”²²

In the case of the Wisconsin School for Girls collection, in addition to Statute 16.61, the contents are also protected by Section 48.78(2) of the Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 48, known as the Children’s Code, which further restricts information in records about minors.²³ Simply stated, this statute restricts access to unredacted records of juveniles to their parents or legal guardians or to other parties in possession of court orders. In addition, Title 18 of United States Code on the use of juvenile records dictates that identities of minors in records be protected either through use of their initials, redactions, or sealed documents.²⁴ Because inmate admission records include the physical and mental condition and medical tests administered to inmates upon arrival, they are considered medical records and must adhere to statutes regarding care of and access to medical information. Wisconsin Statute 51.30, Records, and Statute 146.82, Confidentiality of Patient Health Care Records, detail medical registration and treatment records as confidential and mandate restricted access to records.²⁵ While archivists should be aware of state and local laws governing records concerning minors before providing access, federal statutes also provide a good set of guidelines for the absolute minimum amount of restriction (use of initials, redactions, or sealing) that should be applied to juvenile records. As a custodian of these records, WHS has an obligation to adhere to record guidelines to protect the privacy of individuals in those records and to balance that obligation against providing patron access. These state statutes also reduce (although do not totally eliminate) the ability of archivists to exercise personal discretion in allowing patron access to a collection, as well as the potential for staff abuse of personal information.²⁶ Patrons are alerted to user restrictions in the finding

aid and catalog record and are prompted to contact a reference archivist for further details.²⁷

WHS has policies and procedures in place to help provide access for patrons, while still protecting the privacy of individuals documented in the records.²⁸ For access, a patron must first speak with a reference archivist about the specific restrictions and explain his or her research intentions. Next, the patron must write a letter of intent outlining the anticipated use of the collection and sign a consent form stating that he or she understands the terms of use, such as restricted photocopying, and the ramifications of using identifying information. Through this process of communication about restrictions, misuse ramifications, and patron acknowledgment of restrictions, WHS follows state and federal mandates for privacy while still permitting access.²⁹ Roland Baumann suggested that the use of a contract and a policy designed to handle restricted collections reduces “administrative uncertainty, enhances archival authority and responsibility in this domain, and speeds up the reference process to the benefit of all users.”³⁰ Ultimately, it is up to WHS to properly train its staff on the issues surrounding restricted collections, as it is the reference archivist who makes the decision to allow a patron access.³¹

Anticipated Patron Groups

The records from the Wisconsin School for Girls offer evidence that the patron may use to discern what the creators of the admission records, the institution as a whole, and the State of Wisconsin valued.³² These records hold importance for patrons because they were part of the Wisconsin School for Girls’ daily activities, and, as Ciaran Trace stated, were “serving as an authentic testimony to the actions, processes, and procedure of these creators.”³³ The admission record was designed to capture a demographic snapshot of the life a girl led, what her family was like, and, to a greater extent, what the community she came from was like. Comments such as why the girl was incarcerated offer insight into what society valued at the time and a view into the social factors, such as assumption of promiscuity and incorrigibility, that influenced the creation of these records.³⁴ However, the Wisconsin School for Girls records do not offer only insight into the values and ideologies of the recordkeepers; the user may also theorize what the institution as a whole valued by reading the records.³⁵ One need only look at notes about the girls’ health upon arrival and later notes about girls’ continuing treatments to discern that the Wisconsin School for Girls was invested not in just reforming the inmates’ behaviors, but in improving the overall quality of their lives. In the case of record 3610, the inmate was given Wasserman tests, G.I. smears, and gonorrhea tests repeated over a six-month period.³⁶ Of these tests, only the inmate’s initial G.I. smear

tested positive; nevertheless, she was continually given the Wasserman and gonorrhea tests, and she was treated for her G.I. condition until test results reported negative five months later.³⁷

The Wisconsin School for Girls' records craft a picture of the major obstacles facing a specific, marginalized Wisconsin population. The informational value of the collection attracts various groups of patrons who find it valuable for addressing social questions, issues of government accountability, and genealogical research. The records within this collection also provide raw statistical data about the incarcerated population, offering social and historical researchers tools to construct hypotheses about the causes and effects of female juvenile delinquency in early twentieth-century Wisconsin.³⁸ The records are significant to the Wisconsin state government in that they allow it to gain perspective on its own history, and they act as a source about what has worked and what has not worked in juvenile corrections in the past.³⁹ Moreover, James O'Toole and Richard Cox showed that the review of legal records allows the patron to gain perspective on records that "take place within the specific context of society's legal system"⁴⁰ and to create a historical narrative about the rehabilitation and treatment provided to past inmates. For genealogists whose research acts as a way of "anchoring themselves and their family in time," the records capture a strangely intimate moment in a relative's life, providing new context for or evidence of family history.⁴¹ Additionally, an inmate's record may be one of the few ever created about her, making that record a valuable resource that provides a time and location in the geography of a family's history.⁴²

Beyond issues concerning minors and medical records, the primary reason for the restrictions protecting the Wisconsin School for Girls' records is that the information contained within those records compromises the right to privacy, not only of the incarcerated girls, but, as Trace stated, "those whose lives are somehow contained within the record and whose lives are later shaped by it."⁴³ Presumably, many of the inmates in the records went on to productive lives securing employment, starting families, and contributing to their communities. The publication of identifying information about their childhoods may be reminders of unwelcome episodes the former inmates would prefer to leave behind.⁴⁴ For these reasons, it is vital that archivists limit the identifying information in the collection that they make available. Furthermore, if a researcher were to attempt to contact a subject from the files or her descendants, that act would breach the former inmate's right to privacy.⁴⁵ The state trusts WHS to safeguard not only her privacy, but also the privacy of those who involuntarily had records created about them as a result of the girl's incarceration, such as family members, peers, and communities where the inmate resided.

Literature Review and Discussion

In an ever-evolving quest to engage the public with archival collections and attract a wider patron base, repositories have had to reinvent themselves into hybrid institutions containing born-digital and digitized versions of analog collections. In doing so, repositories are able to reach new patron bases. Heather Macneil wrote, "The value of digitizing archival holdings is indisputable, it increases the volume and diversity of digitized resources that are available to the public and enables communities to connect with their cultural heritage in ways that previously were not possible."⁴⁶ Macneil theorized that repositories are translating the traditional trust society has bestowed upon them as custodians of state and social history into a new melding of physical and virtual documents, making a repository's website the key to continued public trust.⁴⁷ WHS is no exception to this trend; a variety of digital collections are currently available to patrons on its website.

Reading the pages of the Wisconsin School for Girls' inmate records, it is difficult not to be deeply affected by the silent narrative the records create about their lives. Because of the rich depictions of early twentieth-century Wisconsin life the records provide and the opportunity to reach new patron groups, this collection would be a valued addition to WHS's digitized materials.

The restrictions associated with this collection present obvious obstacles in its digitizing. Two procedures would make the records accessible to researchers while still preserving the privacy of the inmates: digitization or transcription of the records with select information redacted and an online user agreement form to which a patron must consent before accessing the collection.

The case of the Stanley Milgram collection at Yale University is a good model for redacted digitization. Diane Kaplan outlined the process the Manuscripts and Archives Department used to make research files containing personal information about research subjects available. Although at the time of Kaplan's article digitization was not the end goal for the Milgram Collection, the process the Manuscripts and Archives Department used to make records available to researchers translates well into digitized records and meets the archivist's goal of providing access to records that would otherwise be restricted.⁴⁸ The Manuscripts and Archives Department relied on researchers to request specific records before redaction occurred. In doing so, the department shifted the expense of the redacting process, which otherwise would have required considerable staff time and money, to the first researcher requesting a restricted record. After a record was redacted, it would be available to all future researchers at no additional charges.⁴⁹ The process used to redact the records was the same in each instance in that "places where subject names appear in the files are fairly standard, and students have been trained to remove them. We have

calculated the average number of sheets in a data file and the average amount of time it takes to copy sheets, remove the name, and make the use copies. We charge a per subject fee based on these calculations.”⁵⁰ Researchers were made aware of this option to access restricted records by a note explaining the entire process in the MARC and RLIN records as well as in the public finding aid.⁵¹

Another repository that has instituted redacting information from records in its collection to make them widely available to the public is the controversial Image Archive on the American Eugenics Movement created by the Dolan DNA Learning Center. Much like the Milgram records, study subjects’ names and locations were redacted to protect the privacy of those who had records created about them and because “the inclusion of subject names made no substantive contribution to the primary purpose of the site,” which is to educate the public on the early twentieth-century American eugenics movement.⁵² In an important feature on the website, essays written by staff provide context to the photos and documents displayed for researchers.⁵³ Nine long essays and several short ones accompany a list of subject headings to ground the user in the importance of the records, the controversy surrounding them, and the respectful discretion that must be exercised when studying them.⁵⁴ Arguably more important to safeguarding the identity of those in the eugenics records than contextual essays is the user agreement a researcher must physically click to access most of the eugenics collection. The user agreement form, like meeting with a reference archivist and signing an agreement of use, is designed to educate the patron on ethical use of the collection’s contents and again shifts responsibility away from the repository for misuse of the contents. The website also clearly informs researchers that all documents in their original, nonredacted forms are available at the repository for further research.⁵⁵

Despite the obvious advantages to digitization with redacted information, there are two major drawbacks to making records of this nature available to patrons online. Redaction eliminates vital identifying information necessary to genealogists, and no official way exists to monitor patron use of digitized materials. Virginia Stewart argued that, in the case of redacted records, the archivist does “a disservice to those attempting to correlate information from several agencies or systems, to those attempting longitudinal studies of individuals, and to those personal users seeking to learn such matters as age, marital status, or health treatment.”⁵⁶ In the case of the Wisconsin School for Girls’ records, the removal of all identifying information would indeed make it almost impossible for patrons to access digitized records about a specific inmate unless they already knew the inmate’s record number. However, as in the case of the eugenics website, any patron using the Wisconsin School for Girls’ collection would always be able to access the original documents with identifying information at

WHS. In doing so, he or she would be able to identify the appropriate records at WHS and later access the digital copies.

The other issue surrounding digitized materials is the accountability of user agreements and the possibility of patron misuse of restricted records. Sonia Yaco argued that user agreements and nondisclosure forms are difficult to enforce unless carefully monitored. Unless they stipulate that researchers must submit works to be published to a review panel, most repositories do not monitor researchers' use of records, leaving it to the discretion of patrons. Yaco also argued that it is highly unlikely a repository would seek legal redress if a researcher were to publish confidential information about records.⁵⁷ In contrast, the Dolan DNA Learning Center determined that the benefits of making the eugenics records available to researchers outweighed the risk of posting them on its website and confronting misuse as it may occur.⁵⁸

For WHS and the Wisconsin School for Girls' records, the solution for responsibly digitizing inmates' records falls somewhere between the extremes of digitizing nothing and digitizing everything. Digitizing the entire Wisconsin School for Girls' collection is not feasible for a number of reasons: the collection is not a priority for digitization because of its restricted content but also because of the investment in staff time and the fragile physical condition of the record books. One solution to scanning the records would be to transcribe each record; however, this, too, would take considerable staff resources. In responsibly digitizing the collection, WHS could adopt practices from the Milgram records and the eugenics movement website. Like the Milgram records, copies of records could be redacted by student workers and digitized on a request-only basis, thereby making available to patrons the option of having individual records digitized that will then be available to others in the future. Patrons should be alerted to the availability of digitization and the process of redaction via the public finding aid. As on the eugenics website, staff-written essays providing context for the records would need to accompany all digitized records made available to the public on WHS's website. WHS is entrusted by the state to be a responsible custodian of the Wisconsin School for Girls collection; it would not be advisable to give completely unrestricted access to the digitized collection even when redacted without further acknowledgment by patrons of the sensitivity of the contents. Therefore, before accessing the digitized version of the records, patrons would be required, as they are on the eugenics movement website, to complete a user agreement form acknowledging researcher responsibility for ethical use of the collection.

Case Study

To examine the feasibility of a project focused on digitization of records with redaction of identifying information in easily identifiable fields (as Yale University did with the Stanley Milgram Collection), a limited digitization project was undertaken at WHS. One hundred pages representing the records of fifty inmates were digitized with the “Name and Age” field physically blocked out and then examined to see to what extent they then complied with legal and ethical guidelines for juvenile records. Unfortunately, clearly identifying information was still present in six records, and an additional fourteen records contained contextual information that might be used to identify an inmate through other sources. Based on these findings, even with the “Name and Age” block redacted, making digital versions of these records publicly available would violate the privacy of a significant number of individuals. This adds considerable time to the redaction process, as it essentially requires a worker to read the entire record and redact information on a case-by-case basis. One possible option is to digitize and make available a sample of records that do not contain identifying information outside the “Name and Age” block. Although this is not a perfect solution, it may represent an adequate compromise that could at least partially satisfy the needs of all stakeholders.

Examination of the records that did not meet privacy requirements revealed that, of the six records that contain information clearly identifying an inmate, five include newspaper articles pasted into the volume containing the full names of the young women and other identifying information (usually place of residence and names of other family members such as parents and siblings). These newspaper articles center around escape attempts and disturbances at the school, arrests and court proceedings that resulted in the commitment of the girls to the school, and one about a young woman who tragically committed suicide after leaving the school. The sixth record to completely fail to satisfy privacy concerns includes a legal form pasted into the volume certifying the inmate as “feeble-minded” and providing her full name. Even though the “Name and Age” blocks were fully redacted in these six records, making them publicly available would still result in clear violations of privacy and breaches of legal and ethical obligations.

Fourteen additional records would likely breach privacy if they were digitized and made public without further redaction beyond the “Name and Age” block. These records include the full names of the inmates’ parents in the “Family History” section, including surnames. They often mention siblings and provide their names as well. With this information, it would not be difficult to locate the full names of the inmates using publicly searchable databases of the 1920 census. A researcher would know a girl’s surname and the names of other

family members (critically, including parents) and be able to guess a reasonable approximation of the inmate's age. While some families may have moved to Wisconsin after the 1920 census, making location through the census slightly more difficult, a large amount of relevant information would still be available to assist in locating the full names of the young women. This may not technically constitute a legal breach of privacy depending on state and local law, as the names of the inmates are not directly provided, but making so much contextual information available in an era of easily sortable and searchable census data would certainly warrant at least a discussion about whether ethical standards were being upheld.

Overall, digitizing records (even on an on-request basis) and blocking out the "Name and Age" block to protect privacy cannot be considered a success. Of the fifty records surveyed, six clearly identify their subjects by name. An additional fourteen records provide enough contextual information for a researcher to likely be able to identify the inmate with publicly available resources and little effort. Assuming legal and ethical goals of full anonymity for the juveniles, this method of digitization would have failed in 40 percent of the sample records. Even using a less stringent standard that allowed for contextual information such as full names of parents, this method would still result in a failure to protect privacy in 12 percent of the records in the sample. In such a sensitive matter, these error rates are entirely unacceptable.

The reason for this failure is that records were not maintained in a consistent enough format to make redaction by blocking out a particular area of the form feasible. Those filling out the forms varied their practices, providing different amounts of information and supplemental information in some, but not all, cases. Blocking out the "Name and Age" block significantly lowered the percentage of records that provide identifying information, but did not meet the goal of maintaining complete anonymity. Blocking out all of the areas identified in this sample that provide identifying information is a possible response, but that would involve additional processing time and lead to unnecessary redaction in many cases. Further, even if this were undertaken, it would still not guarantee full success without an examination of each record individually in each field to account for the inconsistency of recording practices.

One potential solution is to provide a sample of records for digitization. While sampling is usually considered in the context of selecting and appraising records, in this case it could prove useful in digitizing a limited number of records that would provide at least some information while fully satisfying privacy concerns and demanding a much smaller amount of staff time. As Frank Boles noted, "Any time an archivist selects, he or she is representing the past through a small number of documents."⁵⁹ In this hypothetical case, a limited number of records from the volume could be examined individually,

identifying information could be redacted, and the records could be digitized. It should be stressed that this would not provide a representative sample of records that could be used to further generalize about the entire population of inmates, but it would provide at least some information about the residents of the school. Critically, it would also satisfy privacy concerns by fully anonymizing the inmates and protecting their privacy.

Digital Collection's Patron Base

While satisfying legal and ethical concerns regarding the privacy of the inmates, a sample approach still has limitations for users. Genealogical researchers would find the records useless, as their goal of locating particular individuals by name in a record directly conflicts with privacy laws and concerns. Researchers looking for statistical data for the juvenile population as a whole would also find the information lacking, as it would be largely anecdotal in nature and not mathematically representative. The records would still provide valuable qualitative data for researchers looking for information on the life of young women in the time period and how they sometimes came into conflict with the legal system; furthermore, if it is assumed that the most sensational stories received media coverage, it is likely that the most tragic and colorful anecdotes would still be available through other sources such as newspapers. Despite limitations, even a small sample of digitized records could also serve as a means of promoting the collection and notifying the public that it does exist and (with certain restrictions) is available for researchers. This method would also satisfy critical privacy concerns fully, both legally and ethically, as the identities of the individuals in the digitized records would be protected. Additional staff time would be required to examine each record, but as the records consist of only two pages (with the second page often nearly blank), this time would be limited. It would also serve to make at least some of these often tragic stories available to a wider audience and help to preserve them.

Conclusion

Redacted digital representations of samples of the Wisconsin School for Girls' records coupled with the use of an online user agreement form to access the collection would establish viable procedures by which WHS would be able to create a digital representation of this collection while still preserving public trust in its custodianship, although the project comes with complications and limitations. Following the example of the Manuscript and Archives Department at Yale University in its handling of the Stanley Milgram collection, redacting a limited sample of records, and further records as requested, to increase

awareness of the collection and adopting the practice of the eugenics movement website in accompanying digitized materials with contextual essays and a user agreement would ensure the cost-effective digitization and ethical patron use of the Wisconsin School for Girls' collection. Combining the examples of the Milgram and eugenics movement collections would allow WHS to permit access to the Wisconsin School for Girls' collection to a greater patron base while still fulfilling its duties of protecting sensitive information contained within the records. The public expectation of and appetite for digitized collections are growing. To attract a wider patron base, repositories will need to reevaluate previous assumptions about restricted materials and hypothesize how to make materials like the Wisconsin School for Girls' collection more widely available to patrons. Digitization of the Wisconsin School for Girls' records would allow a wider patron base to access the collection, unfettered by geographic or institutional time restraints.

That being said, the projected patron base for this collection of social, historical, and genealogical researchers will find limitations in the information provided through digitization. Furthermore, State Statutes 16.61, Records of State Offices and Other Public Records, 48.78(2), the Children's Code, 51.30, Records, and 146.82, Confidentiality of Patient Health Care Records restrict patron access to the collection, strive to protect the privacy of those who did not have control over the creation of the records, and complicate the digitization process. However, the voice of the eleven-year-old inmate, record 3648 mentioned earlier, deserves a chance to be heard and understood. Her admission record offers an uncomfortable view of early twentieth-century Wisconsin that challenges the reader. Moreover, her record is a testimony to Wisconsin's attempt to protect the girl from further harm. The informational and evidential value contained in the Wisconsin School for Girls' collection is incomparable for researchers, and responsible digitization of this collection would allow greater access to these important records.

Appendix

Transcript of an Incoming Inmate Admission Record

Wisconsin School for Girls Inmate Case History Books 1875–1926, Volume 13
3610 Wisconsin Industrial School

Name and Age: (redacted)	16 yrs, March 24, (redacted)
Date of reception, from whom received, at whose expense.	January 7, (redacted) Mrs. (redacted), Public-woman Madison, Wis
When and by what court or authority committed or en-trusted to the school.	January, (redacted) Juvenile Court Judge (redacted) Dane County
Term of commitment and cause.	Until discharged by law Delinquency
History of family.	Father, (redacted), deceased, mother (redacted), 1 brother, (redacted), 21 years, 1 sister, (redacted), 23 yrs, mother is house-wife and of French descent Live at (redacted), Wis
Previous personal history of inmate.	Born in (redacted) March 24, (redacted). Has been immoral only once with a (redacted). They were married about a year ago at (redacted), Wis. Went to Florida and her mother took her away. Had a child from this man but claims did not live with them. Was found in an apartment one evening with 2 students of the "U" with the lights out. Her mother thinks she may be pregnant again but girl denies it.
Previous education of inmate.	Senior High

Real cause of being placed in the school.	Stated above.
Present physical condition.	G.I. smear = June 15 (redacted) = Positive-under treat. 12/19/(redacted)-Wasserman Neg. Feb 6, (redacted)-Wasserman test = negative July 16, (redacted)-Gonorrhoea = negative July 14 (redacted)- ‘ “ = ” ’ “ 16 ” “ ” } treat. discount. [sic] at this time. 11-4-(redacted) Smear neg. 12-12-(redacted) Wasserman neg.
Personal description and appearance.	Height 64 inches. Weight 116 lbs. Brown Eyes & brown bobbed hair.
Religion and nationality.	Protestant-German American Presbyterian.
Remarks.	To Lynde- To Lynde 10/21-(redacted)-10-14- To Russell.

Subsequent History.

July-20th (redacted). (redacted) was transferred to Model Home
Oct 15- (redacted) Escaped from “Model”

“ 21-(redacted) returned from escape. About 2½ weeks after her return she laid a plan, and induced 15 girls to join her, to take the keys away from Miss (redacted) a substitute teacher and they would there make a break for freedom. Mr. (redacted) the workman to [sic] had been talking to (redacted) from a window where she was and she had asked him to [illegible]to take their- [sic] for this plan there was no fault found with the school or offices, just a distraction to get out and get with men. Other girls not in this plan got word of it and reported it and another worker took Miss (redacted) duties. Shortly after 6:30-[sic] (redacted) who was [illegible] and the others follow began imprudence and disorders and Miss (redacted), her teacher ordered her to leave her room and go up stairs instead of doing that she went to the other side of the room by (redacted) and continued the disorder. The Lufat- [sic] was sent for and (redacted) was still standing there where she arrived. She was asked to go to her seat which she did and after Talking to all available-the Lufat took (redacted) up stairs and later Just her in her room. She disclosed the whole plan and said the other girls would not follow her though they had said they would, and that they had now made a fool of her.

(redacted) was transferred to Russell Cottages and the others determined and left in silence.

This book discontinued July 1, 1926. Refer to folder.

Note: "Subsequent History" also includes a newspaper clipping about the police discovering the girl at the apartment.

NOTES

- ¹ Wisconsin School for Girls Inmate Case History Books 1875–1926, Volume 13, Series 1381, Wisconsin School for Girls, Wisconsin Historical Society.
- ² Wisconsin School for Girls, "Agency history record," The Wisconsin Historical Society. ArCat (WIHV86-A363).
- ³ Wisconsin Office of the Secretary of State, Chapter 323, in *Wisconsin Session Laws, Volume 1876* (Democrat Printing Co., 1876), 847, http://books.google.com/books/about/Wisconsin_session_laws.html?id=5PoqAAAAIAAJ.
- ⁴ *A Brief History of the Department of Corrections*, Wisconsin Department of Corrections Special Reports, <http://worldcat.org/arcviewer/1/WIDAG/2006/08/07/0000024307/viewer/file1.html>.
- ⁵ State Board of Control of Wisconsin, *Wisconsin Industrial School for Girls, for the Biennial Period Ending June 30 1926* (1926), 446.
- ⁶ In the case of these records, the term "incorrigible" was used broadly to describe behaviors ranging from promiscuity to disobeying parents.
- ⁷ State Board of Control of Wisconsin, *Wisconsin Industrial School for Girls*, 446–47.
- ⁸ Mary Jo Pugh, "Identifying Uses and Users of Archives," in *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 34.
- ⁹ See the Appendix for an example of an inmate admission record. By the end of volume 13, the physical condition of the girl upon arrival was generally left blank.
- ¹⁰ Review of the records shows that typically the Wisconsin state court delivered the girls to the institution and paid for their incarceration.
- ¹¹ Frequent reasoning for incarceration included the blanket terms "delinquent," "immoral," "disobedient to parents," "incorrigible," and less typically "truant."
- ¹² Many of the incarcerated girls came from large families where it was typical for one or more parent to be deceased or institutionalized.
- ¹³ This field was used to describe behavior that led the girl to the institution, such as in record 3639, volume 13: "Has been immoral with so many men that she can't count them, ever since 14 yrs of age." Many entries in this field contain the names of boys and men that inmates were suspected to have had "immoral" contact with.
- ¹⁴ Many girls stopped attending school by the eighth grade.
- ¹⁵ The majority of comments in this section are simply "Stated above," referring to the cause of commitment. In only one instance, record 3645, does the remarks state "neglected mostly."
- ¹⁶ Records indicate a high number of inmates admitted with sexually transmitted diseases, childhood diseases, and, in some cases, pregnancy. Most girls were given a "G.I. smear" and a "Wasserman test" upon admission.
- ¹⁷ The majority of comments in this section are dormitory or staff assignments.
- ¹⁸ This field was used to document any facility transfer, parole information, or behavioral problems. Sometimes this section also contains newspaper clippings about the inmate, such as record 3633, which contains notes of the inmate's parole and a subsequent newspaper clipping of the girl's suicide in front of her family.
- ¹⁹ Pugh, "Identifying Uses and Users of Archives," 35.

- ²⁰ “§16.61 Records of State Offices and Other Public Records,” Wisconsin State Legislature, Wisconsin Legislative Documents, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/16/III/61>.
- ²¹ “Public Records Board State of Wisconsin,” State of Wisconsin, <http://publicrecordsboard.wi.gov/index.asp?locid=165>.
- ²² “§16.61(4) Approval for Disposition of Records,” Wisconsin State Legislature, Wisconsin Legislative Documents, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/16/III/61/4>.
- ²³ “§48.78(2) Confidentiality of Records,” Wisconsin State Legislature, Wisconsin Legislative Documents, <http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/48/XVII/78>.
- ²⁴ “U.S. Code Title 18 Part IV Chapter 403 § 5038,” Cornell University Law School, Legal Information Institute, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/5038>.
- ²⁵ “Wisconsin Statutes Table of Contents,” Wisconsin State Legislature, Wisconsin Legislative Documents, <http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/prefaces/toc>.
- ²⁶ Alice Robbin, “State Archives and Issues of Personal Privacy: Policies and Practices,” *The American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986): 164.
- ²⁷ Roland M. Baumann, “The Administration of Access to Confidential Records in State Archives: Common Practices and the Need for a Model Law,” *The American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 367.
- ²⁸ Baumann, “The Administration of Access to Confidential Records in State Archives,” 350.
- ²⁹ David M. Weinberg, “The Other Side of the Human Experience: Providing Access to Social Service Case Files,” *The American Archivist* 53 (Winter 1990): 124.
- ³⁰ Baumann, “The Administration of Access to Confidential Records in State Archives,” 366.
- ³¹ Weinberg, “The Other Side of the Human Experience,” 123.
- ³² Pugh, “Identifying Uses and Users of Archives,” 35.
- ³³ Ciaran B. Trace, “What Is Recorded Is Never Simply ‘What Happened’: Record Keeping in Modern Organizational Culture,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 139.
- ³⁴ Trace, “What Is Recorded Is Never Simply ‘What Happened,’” 151.
- ³⁵ Trace, “What Is Recorded Is Never Simply ‘What Happened,’” 153.
- ³⁶ For the purpose of this article, the Wasserman test will be presumed to be a test for identifying syphilis. The spelling “Wasserman” is transcribed from the records. G.I. smear will be presumed to be the stool guaiac test used to identify blood in the stool and anemia. For further information on these tests, see the following sources: Charles Franklin Craig, *The Wassermann Test: Published with Authority of the Surgeon General, United States Army* (St. Louis, Mo.: Mosby, 1918), 30, http://books.google.com/books?id=G3UoAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s; “Medline Plus Stool Guaiac Test,” Medline Plus, <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003393.htm>.
- ³⁷ See the Appendix for the inmate’s full medical record.
- ³⁸ James M. O’Toole and Richard J. Cox, “Recording, Keeping and Using Information,” in *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006), 15.
- ³⁹ Pugh, “Identifying Uses and Users of Archives,” 39.
- ⁴⁰ O’Toole and Cox, “Recording, Keeping and Using Information,” 12, 41.
- ⁴¹ O’Toole and Cox, “Recording, Keeping and Using Information,” 40.
- ⁴² Weinberg, “The Other Side of the Human Experience,” 125.
- ⁴³ Trace, “What Is Recorded Is Never Simply ‘What Happened,’” 143.
- ⁴⁴ Trace, “What Is Recorded Is Never Simply ‘What Happened,’” 143.
- ⁴⁵ Diane E. Kaplan, “The Stanley Milgram Papers: A Case Study on Appraisal of and Access to Confidential Data Files,” *The American Archivist* 59 (Summer 1996): 292.
- ⁴⁶ Heather Macneil, “Trust and Professional Identity: Narratives, Counter-Narratives and Lingering Ambiguities,” *Archival Science* 11 (2011): 188.
- ⁴⁷ Macneil, “Trust and Professional Identity,” 183–84.
- ⁴⁸ Kaplan, “The Stanley Milgram Papers,” 294.
- ⁴⁹ Kaplan, “The Stanley Milgram Papers,” 294.
- ⁵⁰ Kaplan, “The Stanley Milgram Papers,” 295.
- ⁵¹ Kaplan, “The Stanley Milgram Papers,” 294.

- ⁵² Martin L. Levitt, "Ethical Issues in Constructing a Eugenics Website," in *Privacy and Confidentiality Perspectives: Archivists and Archival Records*, ed. Menzi L. Behrnd-Klodt and Peter J. Wosh (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 121.
- ⁵³ "Virtual exhibits," Image Archives on the American Eugenics Movement, <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/list3.pl>.
- ⁵⁴ Levitt, "Ethical Issues in Constructing a Eugenics Website," 119–20.
- ⁵⁵ Levitt, "Ethical Issues in Constructing a Eugenics Website," 120–21.
- ⁵⁶ Virginia R. Stewart, "Problems of Confidentiality in the Administration of Personal Case Records," *The American Archivist* 37 (July 1974): 390.
- ⁵⁷ Sonia Yaco, "Balancing Privacy and Access in School Desegregation Collections: A Case Study," *The American Archivist* 73 (Fall/Winter 2010): 665.
- ⁵⁸ Levitt, "Ethical Issues in Constructing a Eugenics Website," 125.
- ⁵⁹ Frank Boles, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 149.

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