

Department of Institutions
State of Washington
Olympia

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HISTORIC PUGET SOUND FORT

COMES BACK TO NEW LIFE AND NEW ROLE

Where officers' ladies once served afternoon tea, delinquent and disturbed youngsters from all over the state today are sitting down to dinner---to learn to live together and play together.

And where the parade ground once rang with Army bugles sounding retreat, today there's a different sound---that of young men scrimmaging in football practice and eight-year-olds playing baseball.

The scene is Fort Worden, in upper Jefferson County just outside Port Townsend. The State Department of Institutions for the past 14 months has been transforming a derelict old Army post into a diagnostic and treatment center for 196 boys.

The layout of the old fort fits this new use which has been found for its historic buildings. Large duplex officers' houses are an ideal homelike set-up for the 100 boys receiving treatment. Barracks which once sounded to the masculine shouts of turn-of-the-century soldiers now provide a sparkling clean and tastefully rejuvenated place to diagnose just what is wrong with the boys who run afoul of the law.

Instead of housing the boys in large dormitories as many states still do, the boys at Worden receiving treatment live

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instead in smaller unit cottages housing 14 or 15 boys each. In charge of each cottage is a housemother so that the boys can become accustomed to a relationship many of them never had.

Day begins early for the boys in treatment. They arise at six o'clock, clean their rooms and make their beds. Breakfast is at seven---and it's hot and good. Unlike many institutions in other states, the staff eats the same food as the boys.

The boys' school day begins at 8:00 a.m. and runs both morning and afternoon the year around. The school at the fort has 15 teachers, and this past year graduated two boys from high school. It has a strong academic orientation although training in the trades is available.

Crafts, sports out in the big parade ground if the weather is nice, and it generally is for the fort is in Washington's "banana belt," and work assignments keep the boys busy until dinner. After dinner their free time may be spent watching television like many boys in their own homes. Or they may take in a movie or go into Port Townsend for bowling or roller skating.

The townspeople, incidentally, concerned at first by an institution housing many older boys who have serious delinquency records, now welcome the payroll of some 140 people as a major new industry.

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Weekends may find the boys on camping trips with trained recreational supervisors, or maybe there's a weiner roast on the beach scheduled for the younger boys. Or perhaps there's a field trip to Neah Bay...or the fish hatchery, but whatever is planned, church with the Fort Chaplain comes first on Sunday.

Fort Worden now is able to handle many 8-year-olds, a treatment facility that is rare among the nation's institutions treating young male delinquents.

Each boy, once diagnosed for treatment, is assigned to a counselor who is responsible for the therapy the boy receives. There are now four psychologists and eight psychiatric social workers at Fort Worden who see the boys from one to four hours a week, make progress reports, and evaluate the youngster's adjustment potential to the time when he leaves the fort. The average length of time most of the boys are in treatment is eight months, and careful preparation is given to following his course once he leaves. Recitivism--- a high-flown term used to describe repeaters who return to the institution---is markedly low among Fort Worden "graduates."

In contrast to the "open" program permitted the boys in treatment, where their doors are never locked, there is more limited movement outside the cottages for boys being diagnosed.

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These boys are there usually for just six weeks, during which time they are intensively interviewed and tested to evaluate just what treatment each needs. Former emphasis on custody, which many states still maintain, has been tempered here at Fort Worden. Through skilled insight a trained staff tries to find out just what factors are causing the disturbance that put a young life out of joint and then to devise methods to help the boy learn and accept normal values.

What's ahead for Fort Worden, now well into its second year of operation, can probably be spelled out in terms of expanded treatment facilities, with the diagnosis portion of its operation transferred to a more central state location. These, in fact, were the recommendations of the Washington Citizens' Council, which pointed out that this expansion could be achieved with no extra cost.

There will be diagnosis and treatment also ahead for girls sometime this winter, as the fort expands to help disturbed and delinquent young females.

The kids aren't saying it openly---and probably wouldn't quite know how---but there's an air of new hope and bustle about the old fort as it comes slowly back to a new life and a new purpose.

Wonder what the ghosts are saying now?

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