

HISTORY of AA in detention centers from yesterday to today.

1940: As the Fellowship progressed in the early years, pioneers tried to carry the message "inside the walls" of prisons wherever they were - but not always with great success. As early as September 1940, only seven months after the first meeting in Philadelphia, members made their first visit to the local house of correction. There was a quick turnaround, with the first "convert" from the institution joining the A.A. group a few weeks later.

1940: First group created at Washington State Prison (WSP). When the group was formed in 1940, it held its meetings in the basement of the prison control room, which could only be accessed through a trapdoor in the floor. Although this meeting room is no longer accessible, having been sealed off forever and cut off from the rest of the facility, AA members today still have to climb over the old trapdoor to get to the meetings held in the East Complex, ten meters away. Buried beneath the hill where the prison is built, the walls of the old meeting room are adorned with the words of the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Serenity Prayer, all handwritten.

1941: In mid-1941, an A.A. group carried the message inside the walls of the Westchester County, NY penitentiary and a prison group took shape but eventually didn't last long.

1st group at San Quentin prison (1942)

The first prison A.A. group was founded in 1942 at San Quentin Prison in California, thanks to its enlightened and liberal warden, Clinton T. Duffy. Duffy, who died in 1982. Clinton firmly believed in the virtues of the A.A. program at a time when American prisons were in urgent need of reform. He was well aware that many inmates had serious dive-bottle addictions and special needs, especially when they committed their crimes while intoxicated. The A.A.s quickly gained the respect of the other inmates, and many of them, though not alcoholics, wanted to join. When the percentage of alcoholics released on parole who reoffended suddenly dropped from 80% to a spectacular 20%, and then stayed there, all skeptics were convinced.

1957: Groups were set up in 335 prisons in the U.S. and Canada.

2006: 2,500 groups in prisons in the U.S. and Canada.

(Reference: Le mouvement des A.A devient adulte page 6, 91, 92 and 93).

1942: Inmates began meetings at Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla (WSP) as early as 1942, and a group was eventually formed there with the Governor's approval.

Created just seven months after the formation of the very first A.A. correctional group at San Quentin Prison, California, by Warden

Clinton Duffy, the meeting was originally called "The Hilltoppers" because of the prison's elevated position among the wheat fields of Walla Walla County. Although the locals called it "The Hill," the prisoners called it "The Walls," and it was behind these walls that early members Earl C., Roy A., George L., Earl H. and Barney B. attended the first impromptu meeting held in the Great Court in 1942. Soon after, Oliver L., Bruce C. and Earl L. joined the group, and it was these eight men who would later meet regularly in the catacomb-like basement beneath the checkpoint hatch.

1943: The success of the San Quentin A.A. inspired inmates at the Folsom, California prison outside the Sacramento territory. Authorities obtained permission from inmates to contact the San Quentin group for information, and in a remarkable demonstration of the respect the A.A. program had established among authorities at the time, an inmate A.A. member was transferred to Folsom Prison to help inaugurate the first group there. In June 1943, prison officials extended an invitation to the Sacramento chapter to participate in the work being undertaken at the prison. Five members attended a prison A.A. meeting to talk about Alcoholics Anonymous to a "receptive and grateful audience. Folsom's inside and outside A.A. members even developed a strategic plan for dealing with the special conditions in organizing an A.A. group in a detention center. Bill continued his involvement with A.A. in prison as soon as he returned from the West Coast, giving a presentation in late 1943 at Clinton Farms, a women's reformatory in New Jersey. He was later invited to speak at a luncheon of superintendents from other correctional institutions.

1944: The first A.A. group in a federal prison was formed in Atlanta, Georgia. And on April 18, 1944, Walter B. and five other members of the A.A. Morristown group spoke again at Clinton Farms Reformatory, founding a group that is still active today.

1945: Also in April 1945, Ken S. and two other members of the #1 Missouri group from Kansas City, started a group at the nearby federal penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas. Not only is this group still active, but the "Kansas City #1" group still sponsors it.

1946: The affair snowballed, and by 1946, groups had sprung up at McAlester State Prison nicknamed "Big Mac" (according to Google), Oklahoma, the Pennsylvania Penitentiary Farm and Wallkill State Prison.

By 1946, 1100 men were in action, many of them on parole, and 290 members were active at San Quentin. At the time of Director Duffy's book "The San Quentin Story" in 1950, he reported that more than 50 other prisons in the U.S., Canada and Australia had adopted the San Quentin model. And by our 20th anniversary, as Bill W. reported

at the St. Louis convention in 1955, there were groups in 335 prisons around the world, and thousands of former prisoners were staying sober on the outside.

Owen L., an inmate who worked as a clerk for Warden Alexander and a two-time loser if you will, immediately became involved with the group. When he was released in 1944, he founded A.A. in Salt Lake City, Utah. Two years later (1946), he and other members met with Warden John E. Harris and the first group was born at the Utah State Prison.

1947: Stillwater State Prison in Bayport, Minnesota and Deer Lodge State Prison in Montana saw their first groups appear in 1947.

1948: The A.A. movement made its debut in the Texas prison system in 1948 at Huntsville Prison, when the first meeting was held at "The Walls". Five inmates participated.

The South Dakota Federal Penitentiary in Sioux Falls and the McNeil Island Penitentiary in Puget Sound, Washington saw theirs take shape in 1948.

Groups formed at Attica State Prison, NY (1948)

1949: Meetings were held at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City in 1949.

The same year in the Canadian Maritimes, the first A.A. meetings were held at Dorchester Penitentiary in New Brunswick. The oldest officially registered A.A. group in Canada is the Intramural group, founded on June 22, 1949. This group is still active at Dorchester Prison.

The 50s marked a time when many prison groups were founded, including those at Dannemora State Prison, NY, Rawlins State Prison, Wyoming, Shakopee Correctional Facility for Women and Sandstone Federal Prison in Minnesota.

The '50s also saw committed work in Ireland and Finland, the latter having perhaps the largest number of correctional facilities in the world. Groups made their debut in New South Wales and Freemantle, Australia. In the west of the UK, four members who referred to themselves as "Bristol Prison Godfathers" founded several groups from 1959 onwards.

1950: The first prison A.A. group in Western Canada, and certainly a model for any correctional facility, was the Nor-Kel group at Saskatchewan Penitentiary near Prince Albert, founded in May 1950 and still active today (November 2018).

1951: Records show that the first alcoholic inmate in the Texas prison system was taken to an AA convention in Tyler, in 1951.

The first AA meeting in a federal correctional facility in Quebec eventually took place around March 20, 1951, at the St-Vincent-de-Paul penitentiary.

C'est en 1951 que fut fondé le premier groupe de langue française dans une institution, le pénitencier St-Vincent-de-Paul. Ce groupe rédigea et publia une petite revue mensuelle qui avait pour titre «L'Ambassadeur». Cette revue contenait des textes rédigés par des prisonniers: le récit de la vie de quelques-uns d'entre eux, et des traductions d'articles publiés par les A.A.

Réf : Gros livre / 1ère édition en français 18 février 1963 page 7 and the story of Albert page 253 who was released on June 6, 1951 from this penitentiary and says he had AA for about 2 1/2 months before his release.

1952: In 1952 (https://www.aa.org/newsletters/en_US/f-151-markings_spring-2011.pdf), the federal prison in Michigan city, Michigan hosted the first regional conference of prison A.A. groups. More than 600 A.A. friends from the outside joined 196 from the inside - from 7 prisons - to hold the event

1953: Texas - Howard Sublett, then a member of the Classification Committee, became the first department member to sponsor A.A. From Mr. Sublett's personal archives, we learn that only 5% of inmates who had spent six months or more in A.A. while in prison reoffended.

1958 (March): There were active groups in 18 federal prisons.

1960: There were 356 prison groups with a total of 15547 members.

A LASTING LEGACY - In an article written for a special issue of Grapevine magazine on the occasion of AA's 25th anniversary, Warden Duffy, then a member of the California Parole Board, had this to say about Alcoholics Anonymous in prisons: The A.A. program is presented in a humble and humane way, simply and without pressure. This is the method to use to reach the man who has developed a very distrustful attitude. It helps him to face reality without feeling sorry for himself or avoiding responsibility, to get rid of the fear, hatred, jealousy and distrust that have been his for so long. This man learns to eliminate alcohol from his life - to fight its obsession, with the desire to get help from his friends and to fraternize. Not every alcoholic in prison will admit to being powerless over alcohol. But over the years, seeing the influence of A.A. on others, the tough guys finally give in. They realize they've lost control of their lives in every way. They're closer to "wanting".

1962: Norway saw the birth of its first groups in 1962.

In Mexico, Central and South America, prison work became part of the service structure as soon as possible: in Guatemala in 1962, for example.

1966: General Services' work in the field of detention centers also gained experience, evolving gradually from 1966 when the Conference established the Conference

Institutions Committee.

1969: Beginning of the prison service structure in Colombia.

1971: At the first European Congress in Bristol in 1971, 400 people interested in prison work attended A.A. meetings behind the walls in nearby prison institutions. France saw the birth of its first groups in February 1971.

1974: General Services Office survey:

Of all inmates, 50% had been convicted of crimes in which alcohol abuse had been a significant factor.

Of those who responded, 96% believed that an inmate improved his chances of success on the outside by participating in the AA program. 10% of inmates believed to be in prison for alcohol-related crimes in America attend AA meetings.

1981: June 3 - Jean-Guy donated literature to the Valleyfield prison and is looking for volunteers to take the 12th step in the prison.

Above, part of the June 3, 1981 minutes read at the July 1, 1981 meeting:

Members can do the 12th on Mondays from 1:30 to 4 p.m. by giving their names to the prison warden. The warden is taking steps to find a place for an AA meeting in the prison. (We have removed the handwritten PV excerpts from the original document as they contain full names - Réjean B.)

here is no further mention of prison in this Blue Book until November 1982.

Reference: Intergroup minutes 1979 to 1982

1983 :

Telephone committee report

34 information calls

12 " " of 12th step

2 " " Al-Anon

1 " " from Valleyfield penal institution

49 telephone calls

Following this call, a first meeting took place on Tuesday evening, May 3, 1983, at the Valleyfield prison. Raymond C. was coordinator. John C. is sponsor, Yvan S. sponsor.

REF: PV 1982-1986 intergroup committee/12th step on page 22 of the blue book manuscript.

1985 : Meeting of March 6, 1985: Raymond C. reports on the prison meeting.

May 1 meeting: Lucien says it's possible for ex-prisoners to get us to stamp and sign a

notebook for the yard.

June 5, 1985 meeting: Raymond C. and Robert L. report as coordinator and sponsor of the prison group, so we finally have dates!

Reference PV Intergroupe 1982 to 1986

1990: Probably an office will open at the Valleyfield courthouse (November 10, 1990 report from Lucien A., coordinator of the Region 87 detention center committee).

1991: Lucien A., coordinator of the Region 87 Detention Center Committee, shares his time at Cowansville Institution on June 5, 1991.

Delivery of literature to Waterloo Correctional Centre (report by Lucien A. dated June 1991).

Delivery of literature to St-Hyacinthe Correctional Centre (report by Lucien A. dated June 1991).

Jim takes charge of the Ste-Anne-des-Plaines English group (Lucien A.'s report, June 1991).

On **June 9, 1991**, a sponsor is elected for the Sorel correctional center, raising the prospect of the group's reopening (Lucien A. report, June 1991).

Opening of the Sorel group in June 1991. 5 inmates attended (Lucien A. report dated August 24, 1991).

"In July, meeting and contact with the person in charge of intermittent sentences at the Sorel prison.

In July, we met and contacted the person in charge of intermittent sentences at the Montreal detention facility, via the Bordeaux prison in region 90. The person in charge of the facility is Mr. Kelly Duval. The purpose of this meeting was to establish the modalities for meetings at 535 rue Viger Est.

We held our first meeting on August 4. Our sponsor is Alain C., a responsible member. I can tell you that the premises are quite noisy, as we hold our meetings in a kind of cafeteria. For the time being, there will be two (2) meetings a month. (Lucien A. report, August 24, 1991).

AA Day for Waterloo residents in October 1991. It was a success for the first time. (Lucien A. report, October 19, 1991).

"I attended district #22 meeting in Valleyfield to give information for members involved at the courthouse shortly. Thank you Lucien. dec. 17 1991 we will be meeting with professionals and give them information on A.A. Andre c. has been contacted to finalize everything so we can open in early 1992.

(Lucien A. report dated December 12, 1991).

1992: Tuesday, January 7, 1992 - 1st meeting of the Amitié Sobriété group and start of collaboration with the courts) at District 22 in Salaberry de Valleyfield.

March 19, 1992

"Received a phone call from Marco Hamel of the Cowansville correctional facility. In Cowansville. I had met with him on January 29 about structuring a group within the walls. He is ready to receive us and introduce a leader (sponsor). I'm following up on their request. I'm going to invite public information or the cmp to come and give them the information."

(Report by Guy C. coordinator of the region 87 detention center committee)

May 27, 1992: Opening of a group at the Cowansville provincial detention center (Report by Guy C., coordinator of the region 87 detention center committee).

June 4, 1992: In Valleyfield, I attended the meeting at the Detention Center. Very warm welcome from the Centre's attendants and residents. An impressive number of people attend the meetings - about 20. Thanks to Noël, the sponsor, for inviting me. (Report by Guy C. coordinator of the Region 87 Detention Center Committee)

2003 :

Drummondville Detention Center: Denis A.

Meetings are held every Wednesday evening at 6.8 pm. Thirty to thirty-five people attend A.A. meetings. We will soon be holding our meeting and day of gratitude on December 7. The meeting will take place at the penitentiary chapel with four speakers. The day will be packed with food and snacks all day long.

The detention center's clientele includes informers and all sorts of "hot" people. Our guests mix very well with the inmates. We have a person in charge at the café. The room is always ready and we get total silence for our speaker. André B. sponsor. Gilles M. substitute sponsor. Denis A. replaced these two people.

(November 30, 2003 report by Marcel D. of the Region 87 Detention Center Committee)

N.B: Drummondville is part of region 88 and we do not know how the region 87 committee functioned in relation to the Drummondville correctional center at that time.
June 23, 2016 - Réjean B. / RAD and assistant coordinator JCDD 2016 87-22

2006: AA estimates the number of groups in prisons at over 2527 with over 65,000 members

2010: Salaberry de Valleyfield prison closed on July 1, 2010.

2016 : In the U.S. and Canada, there are nearly 39,731 AA members living in prison and some 1,589 inmate groups. Their meetings meet only part of the need, and more groups are needed in all detention centers. Many inmates seek the hand of AA, but

don't find it.

http://www.aa.org/assets/fr_FR/ff-5_CarryingtheMessagCF.pdf (June 23, 2016)
Brochure - carrying the message in correctional centers FF-5

2 reasons to contribute to the 7th tradition to carry the message into detention centers.

The Correctional Coordinator at G.S.O. responds to over 6,500 letters a year, mostly from alcoholics in custody. Often, the letters request publications, and many express gratitude for the Big Book they received, or for a link to an outside member who can bring a soon-to-be-released alcoholic to his or her first meeting on the outside.

The Corrections staff member at G.S.O. also coordinates an Inmate Correspondence Service and connects over 1,000 alcoholics behind walls with outside members each year, sharing recovery in A.A. by mail. The Sharing Behind Walls newsletter, which contains excerpts from inmate letters to G.S.O., is published four times a year.

This excerpt is from a 2016 G.S.O. 12-point document about the 7th tradition

2018 : Today (November 2018), there are an estimated 1,360 A.A groups in detention centers that are registered with the General Services Office with approximately 34,524 indoor members.

This document is an amalgam of information drawn from the references mentioned below and was put together by the Area 87 Detention Centre Day Committee for the third CDD held on September 23, 2023 at Cedar Park United Church at 204 Av. Lakeview, Pointe-Claire, QC H9S 4C5

Your Area 87 CSD 2023 Committee.

Ref : <http://www.aa-quebec.org/region90/francais/comiteCentresDetention.shtml>
Little blue book: Amitié Sobriété group (Archives district 22 of region 87)
<http://www.alterjustice.org/dossiers/articles/surpopulation.html>
Dropbox: Region 87 Detention Center Committee Reports
Handwritten blue book committee minutes from district 87-22 intergroup from 1979 to 1986.
Box 459 - Summer 2019 / Taking the message behind the walls: The Pioneer Group

Alcoholics Anonymous comes of age

The story of San Quentin by Clinton T. Duffy
Markings, spring 2011
Box 4-5-9, winter 2017 and fall 2018
AA Behind the Walls - Area 68 SW Texas, District 2 (www.area68district2.org)
B.S.G / Correctional

Excerpts from Yvette N.'s History at the Second National Detention Center Conference held in South Portland, Maine on November 2, 3 and 4, 2018.