

2017-K414

Assembly Resolution No. 414

BY: M. of A. Finch

COMMEMORATING the 200th Anniversary of Auburn
Correctional Facility

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor those state prisons and their leadership that strengthen the quality and character of life in this great Empire State, and to commemorate the histories of such correctional facilities; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of Auburn Correctional Facility, to be celebrated on Saturday, August 12, 2017, in conjunction with the City of Auburn's Annual Founder's Day; and

WHEREAS, Auburn Correctional Facility is a maximum security state prison which houses adult males in Cayuga County, and has a current capacity of 1,821 individuals; and

WHEREAS, Auburn Correctional Facility, located on State Street in Auburn, New York, is one of the oldest functional prisons in the United States; Auburn Correctional Facility was the second state prison in New York, after New York City's Newgate Prison (1797-1828), and it was also the site of the first execution by electric chair in 1890; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, Auburn Correctional Facility is where the namesake of the "Auburn System" was created; and

WHEREAS, Auburn Correctional Facility was constructed in 1817 as Auburn Prison, and was built on land by the Owasco River that was once a Cayuga village; and

WHEREAS, The land on which the Auburn Correctional Facility was built was used during the War of 1812 as a British prisoner-of-war camp; after the war, the State of New York accepted the land as a donation from local citizens due to its available water power; and

WHEREAS, On June 22, 1816, a little more than six acres and 20 perches of land was given to the State by Samuel Dill, David Hyde, Ebenezer Beach and John H. Beach; these individuals allowed the State to build a dam across the outlet and retain half the water power produced; and

WHEREAS, Six days later on June 28, 1816, the southeast cornerstone of the wall of the Auburn Correctional Facility was laid; and

WHEREAS, Auburn soon prospered from the prison business; \$20,000 was spent in the first season of work, and the construction of the facility employed numerous builders from the area and abroad; and

WHEREAS, By the winter of 1817, the south wing of Auburn Correctional Facility was ready to receive inmates, and the work moved forward rapidly after 53 men from jails of adjacent counties were sent to aid in the construction, and later, 87 more men were received in 1818 for the same purpose; and

WHEREAS, In 1821, Auburn Correctional Facility's north wing was completed, and it became the model for most American prisons; the south wing was subsequently rebuilt on the same plan; and

WHEREAS, Auburn Correctional Facility had produced a type of cellblock that found many imitators across the country and influenced prison architecture for the next century; and

WHEREAS, Work on the Auburn Correctional Facility continued, and in 1823, the massive main hall and wings, extensive workshops, and an enclosing wall measuring 20 feet high, had been completed at a cost of \$400,000; and

WHEREAS, Auburn Correctional Facility is where the development of the American penal system initially began; during the 1820s, a system of prison administration arose and, for a century, wielded a strong influence upon prisons and reformatories throughout the world; and

WHEREAS; Auburn Correctional Facility segregated prisoners by offense, and they were issued clothing that identified their crime; additionally, the traditional American prison uniform consisting of horizontal black and white stripes originated in the Auburn facility; and

WHEREAS, The "Auburn System," coined for the disciplinary strategies used at Auburn Correctional Facility, was a system developed by William Brittin, John D. Cray, and Elam Lynds; and

WHEREAS, Prisoners under the "Auburn System" were housed in solitary confinement in large rectangular buildings, and performed penal labor under silence that was enforced at all times; the profits of the inmates' labor were then used to help support the prison; and

WHEREAS, Since the 1920s, every official New York license plate has been made behind prison walls in Auburn; and

WHEREAS, Today, Auburn Correctional Facility offers other vocational programs which include building and custodial maintenance, flooring and installation, drafting, electrical, masonry, general business, painting, and welding; and

WHEREAS, Inmates at the Auburn Correctional Facility can also receive adult basic education and GED courses, and take college classes offered by the College Prison Education Program at Cornell University, as well as courses in an associate degree program offered through Cayuga Community College; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of Auburn Correctional Facility; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Michael Pettigrass, Committee Chairman of Auburn Correctional Facility.