

Tchaikovsky Played For City Stockade

By CELESTINE SIBLEY

It was the weekly social hour at the City Stockade and the women prisoners, wearing blue uniforms and expressions of passive curiosity, ranged themselves in a semi-circle to listen to the program.

Later there would be refreshments of tea cakes and chocolate milk, but here was the main event:

A lecture by a representative of the Atlanta Music Club on the music of Tchaikovsky!

Prostitutes and alcoholics and battle-scarred veterans of street brawls folded their hands and listened tolerantly. The lecturer gave them a few side sorties into Viennese waltzes, with the aid of a portable record player, and polished the whole thing off with a soprano solo.

There was a polite patter of applause and two of the prisoners rose quietly and went to haul in the big container of chocolate milk. Another raised her hand to shield her face and remarked, confidentially:

"These ladies have took a lot of trouble to come out here. Some of us ought to appreciate it a lot more than we do."

"I appreciate it," put in another. "I got used to high-class music when I worked at the Greek's. He wouldn't have nothing else on the juke box!"

Members of the Inter-Faith Group of the Atlanta Council of Churchwomen and B'nai B'rith calmly passed the cookies and chatted about Ludie, who is to get out this week, and will need a hand in getting some clothes and a job. The attitude seemed to be that devotional services and lectures on music appreciation might, like the seeds in the New Testament parable, fall on fertile ground—and then again they might, like the highly colored, suitable-for-framing picture entitled "The Governor's Mansion at Puerto Rico," which hangs in the kitchen, simply serve to brighten up the premises.

At any rate, the Wednesday afternoon visit of "the church ladies" is held in considerable esteem by most of the women prisoners at the City Stockade who have been in long enough to be sober. By the time they have been in 20 or 30 days, they look forward to any opportunity to get out of their dormitory for a few minutes, even if it is just across the hall for a church meeting.

At this season of the year when Spring brings to life the rolling red hills of the City Prison Farm there is hard work and plenty of it for everybody but the white women prisoners. They have caught up on the sewing, which is a Winter-long job, and it is too early for canning, which is a Summer job.

The Negro women run the laundry and the kitchen, cooking three meals a day for the work crews and two for the non-working prisoners. Some Negro women don overalls and take to the fields, spreading the black "sludge," residue from the sewage disposal plant, into the terraced hills where feed crops will be planted.

The able-bodied men don their war-surplus jackets with the "PW" (Prisoner of War) stamped on the back and a neat little "CP" (City Prisoner) stamped under that, and go out with the work crews to fields, the dairy barns, the pig pens, city streets, quarry, asphalt plant, school yards and parks and playgrounds. Only the aged, the infirm, the drunk and the white women are left.

"Gets monotonous—like the food," murmured a world-weary-looking woman.

"Oh, I don't know about the food," put in her neighbor, defensively. "It's as good here as it is in any of the prisons I've ever stopped in."

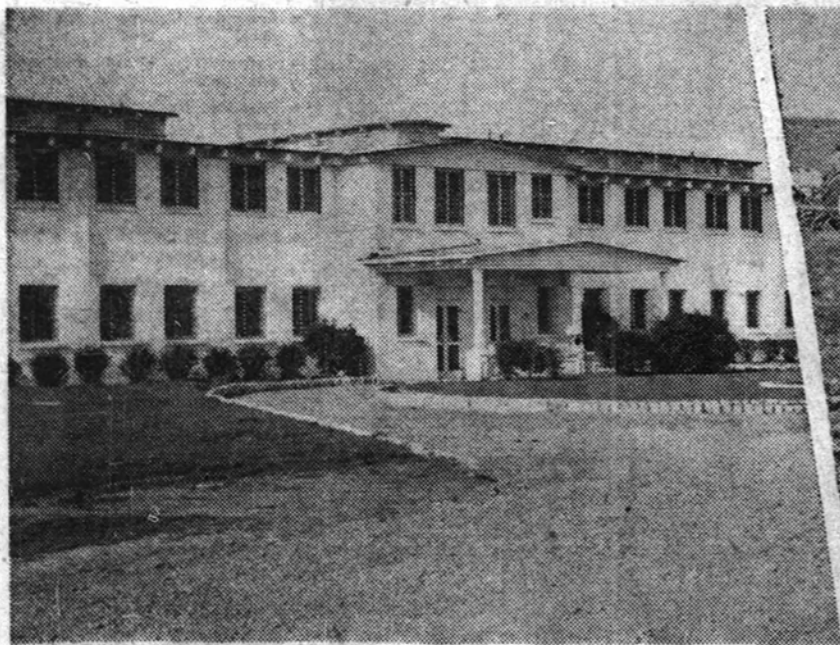
"Beans and corn bread and Virginia ham," intoned the jaded one. "And for a change, they give you Virginia ham and corn-bread and beans!"

"Virginia ham?" repeated the visitor, impressed.

The group laughed, mirthlessly.

"That's what we call fatback!"

Food at the City Stockade, which is situated on a 342-acre farm in DeKalb County, is intended to be substantial and nourishing,



Constitution Staff Photos—Carl Dixon

Life at the City Prison Farm--Destination of Losers--When Judge Says It's Twenty Days

When the judge says "20 days" this is where most Atlanta law violators go—the City Prison Farm. At left is the back door to the lock-up, the entrance and exit

used by the prisoners. Second from left, a group of Negro women prisoners are shown spreading "sludge," a chemically treated refuse from the sewage disposal

plant, into eroded land. Male prisoners, physically unable to work, pass the time in the dormitory by playing checkers, and women prisoners, extreme right, enjoy

their main social event of the week—the visit of Atlanta Council of Churchwomen and B'nai B'rith members. Visitors are Mrs. Jerome Ivey and Mrs. Robert L. Jones.

SOME FIND PEACE AND SATISFACTION AT STOCKADE

Continued From Page 1

rather than interesting. Nearly all of the vegetables are grown on the farm—\$41,092 worth last year. Breakfast customarily includes biscuits and butter, cane syrup, crisp fatback, coffee with cream and no sugar. The other main meal for non-workers is dinner with stew, fried meat or smoked sausage as the most frequently served meats.

Rice and tomatoes, rutabaga turnips and sliced white onions served with vinegar and salt and pepper, and corn muffins are fairly typical on the menu.

Milk from the farm's dairy herd is plentiful enough that every prisoner who wants it may have a quart a day.

H. H. Gibson, Superintendent of the Phison Farm, is an agricultur-

al man who grew up on a farm, was graduated from and later taught in an agricultural college. He has been at the stockade for ten years and has been largely instrumental in converting the eroding red hills to green pasture land and building up the dairy herd. The stockade has a registered bull and recently acquired five Guernsey heifers. Five years ago the stockade acquired a new building which hugs the slope of the highest hill.

The building itself is sturdy and light and clean painted snow white throughout and kept that way by the efforts of the prisoners. The personnel of the prison, headed by Supt. Gibson and his wife as day matron, numbers only 51 paid workers, including the guards who must go out with the separate crews every day.

Across the hill from the stockade proper the former city prison houses the city's venereal disease hospital, where approximately 50 patients are under treatment now for syphilis. It is a prison hospital because anybody who is arrested and found to be infected with a venereal disease must be locked up until he has taken the full course of penicillin every three hours for seven and a half days.

But many who are not prisoners come voluntarily to receive treatment, and may, if they wish, give a fictitious name and go and come at will until they are cured.

All prisoners who are sentenced to the farm in Recorder's Court enter the stockade first. Those who are venereal disease patients are promptly transferred to the hospital. The others are fingerprinted and photographed, divested of their own clothing and supplied with a prison uniform, given

a hot bath and assigned a bed.

Thereafter, during their tenure at the stockade they are required to take two baths a week and they get a change of clothing on Wednesday. All those who are able to work are required to work when there is work to be done.

Often in planting seasons crews remain in the fields longer than the eight hours required—and they are usually happy to do it.

"Overtime earns them five days off every 20-day sentence," Supt. Gibson explained. "Most of them are eager to do that, and then nearly all of them would rather work anyhow."

Hard manual labor on the sunny green terraces wipes out most of the troubles that bring prisoners to the stockade, the Superintendent feels.

"Out here in the country, working hard in the open, helps a man make a new life in a lot of cases," he said. "Of course, we have plenty of repeaters and a few old-timers who look on the stockade as home, but generally a man who would be in trouble and grief in the city can find peace and satisfaction out here on the farm."

The combined efforts of Atlanta churches and Alcoholics Anonymous have brought about surprising reforms among the stockade's "regulars." The "AA's" meet at the stockade every Saturday night and nowadays Supt. Gibson is no longer surprised to hear of the reform of a man who has been in and out on drunkenness charges for 20 years.

But the day the Alcoholics Anonymous are able to chalk up 100 percent success, the city stockade will be forced to close up. Ninety percent of its guests are there because they drank, not wisely, but too well.

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