

Pop-Up Museum!

March 23 – April 1, 2013

Locked safely away in Eastern State Penitentiary's old darkroom, just a few steps from here, hundreds of numbered artifacts rest in neatly organized drawers. Thousands of photographs, also carefully numbered, fill museum storage boxes. Rare books line the shelves.

The darkroom has been fitted with modern climate control systems to preserve the collection. Each object—from a weapon hidden by an Eastern State inmate to a photograph developed in the darkroom where it is stored today—is irreplaceable. It tells part of Eastern State's story.

Officers and inmates saved most of these rare artifacts. Many of them took keepsakes when Eastern State closed as a state prison in 1970. We thank these men and women for returning these fascinating objects to the historic site. Other artifacts were discovered here, abandoned with the penitentiary itself.

Plans are currently under way to build a museum-quality exhibit space inside the penitentiary. Until then, visitors can view photo reproductions (hundreds appear on signs throughout the building), while scholars carefully study the original artifacts.

And, once a year, here in the historic site's climate-controlled conference room, we'll display some of these precious artifacts for our visitors.



On the Walls:

Photographs by Mark Perrott. Featured in his book *Hope Abandoned: The Eastern State Penitentiary*, Published by the Pennsylvania Prison Society and Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, 2000.

Floor Plan of Eastern State Penitentiary. Color coded by year of construction. From the exhibit *Crucible of Good Intentions*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1994.

Tower Illustration by Willard Whitson. Featuring Eastern State Penitentiary's central tower and many famous historical tower inhabitants. Designed to promote a 2011 fundraiser for the *TowerCam!* exhibit.

Case 1: *Arrival*

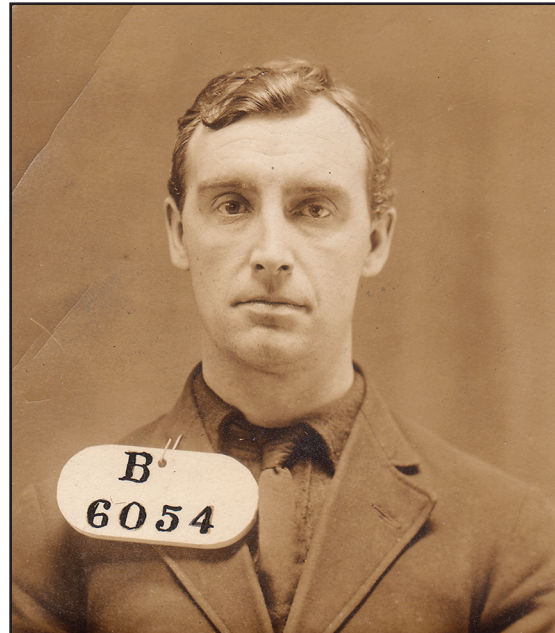
We estimate that 75,000 men and women served time at Eastern State Penitentiary. As many as 1,800 prisoners lived here at once. How did the administration everybody straight?

They needed a system. Before photography and the use of fingerprinting, police and prison systems used a process developed by a French criminologist, Alphonse Bertillon.

Bertillon's method, outlined in the book displayed here, called for the systematic recording of body measurements, tattoos, and even scars. Eastern State Penitentiary officers used the large set of calipers in this case to create measurements for each inmate. The system wasn't perfect, but it helped ensure that people were who they said they were.

The name "Bertillon" stuck. Even when fingerprinting and photographs replaced the system, inmate identification records continued to be called "Bertillon cards." And the room you're standing in—part of the records offices—was officially called "the Bertillon" up until Eastern State closed in 1970.

Historic site staff, who work in this space today, continue to call it "the Bertillon."



In this Case:

Book: *Bertillon System of Identification*, Alphonse Bertillon, 1896. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Records Concerning Inmate B-6054. John Morris Willowby (alias James Stepheson). Willowby was sentenced to Eastern State for bigamy (being married to more than one person at a time) and perjury (lying while under oath) in 1912. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Mug Shot Book, 1904–1906 (Inmates B-2375 to B-3374). Inmate B-3363 died at Eastern State Penitentiary. His cause of death is listed in the Death Ledger displayed in Case 4 of this exhibit. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family. The Scheerer Collection was donated in memory of Andreas Scheerer, Captain of Maximum Security from 1946 to 1971. It is the largest collection donated by one family to Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site. It contains hundreds of photographs and other artifacts that have been instrumental to our understanding of this building and the people who lived and worked here. Captain Scheerer died in 1972 after being attacked at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford.

Caliper Rule. According to the donor, this caliper rule was used as part of the Bertillon system at Eastern State.

Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of William Robinson, former Commissioner of Corrections in Pennsylvania. He received the caliper from former Eastern State Penitentiary Warden Joseph Brierley.

Bertillon Card for Inmate B-5488, Ralph Kunkle. Kunkle was a clerk convicted of felonious entry and larceny (theft of personal property) in 1910. The device against his head helped people keep still during long exposure times, preventing the photograph from blurring. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the family of John D. Shearer.

Bertillon Card (front) for Inmate C-29, c. 1920. This photograph did blur during the long exposure time. Few details survive about this inmate. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Bertillon Card (back) for Inmate C-2261. The front of this card shows the inmate's front and profile images like the photographs in the Mug Shot Book. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Bertillon Card for Inmate D-4102, John Alexander. Alexander was paroled in 1942. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Case 2:

Passing the Time, Making a Buck

Generations of Eastern State inmates filled their hours with the careful, time-consuming work of making handicrafts. Even today, many prisons have gift shops where inmates' crafts are sold directly to the public. Eastern State's "curio shop" was once housed in Cellblock 2, then in the center surveillance hub (see photo), and, later still, in the front gatehouse.

Sometimes this work was highly organized. In the 1960s, for instance, inmate workshops lined the prison's alleyways. One group of inmates carved miniature ship hulls, while another group installed the masts and rigging to complete each model.

Other inmates may have preferred to work alone. Their creations—ranging from a tiny fork and knife set carved from a dinner's soup bones to ornate women's jewelry—seems to express a personal vision carried out under exceptional circumstances.



In this Case:

Wallet Made from Kool and Pall Mall Cigarette Packs. Said to be created by inmate David Aiken, one of the 1945 tunnel escapees. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of Richard Griffin.

Wood Carving: Mounted Albacore Tuna. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Beaded Necklace. The father of the donor of this object owned a bakery at 7th and Dickinson Streets, and brought doughnuts and bagels to Eastern State's prisoners. An inmate gave the baker this necklace in 1929, and he, in turn, gave it to his daughter. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of an anonymous donor.

Wood Carving: Retriever with Pheasant. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Miniature Bone Cutlery Set. The note accompanying the set states that it was made in 1856 for Mary Anna Kaighn by a prisoner in the "Spring Garden Street Prison Philadelphia." He made them from the bones in his soup, using a blade of his jack knife. Mary Anna was 8 years old. Her father, James Kaighn, was a member

of the Board of Visitors and took her with him on his visits to the prison. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Beaded Necklace with Clip-on Earrings. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift in memory of Retiree Bernard M. Sekula, Correction Officer I. Officer Sekula was a guard from 1949 to 1975. He collected almost every issue of the inmate-published magazine, the *Eastern Echo*. He was also on the cleanup crew after the building closed as a state prison in 1970.

Soap Carvings: Clown and Snoopy. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of Dr. and Mrs. Richard Fulmer.

Wood Carvings: Amish Family and Hobo. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of William Martin.

Carved Matchsticks. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of Joseph J. Mucerino. Mr. Mucerino was selected as one of four students at Northeast Catholic High School to apply for a clerk-typist position at Eastern State Penitentiary. He got the job in 1960. An inmate here gave him the matchsticks.

Photo: Curio Display in Center Surveillance Hub. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Biedermann Family.

Foil Art: "Tom and Kitty." Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Photo: Inmate Haircut with Foil Art in Background. The image shows a typical Eastern State barber cell c. 1955. The barber (who also lived in the cell) has decorated his shop with a foil art picture depicting "Tom and Kitty," very similar to the foil art picture displayed here. This image was likely a popular design. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

On the Shelf:

Model Ship Under Glass, the *Essex*. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift in memory of Peter Renc.

Model Ship Under Glass, the *Flying Cloud*. In 1950, Edwin J. Feiler Jr. received this model ship as a bonus after purchasing a large order of model ships from Eastern State for a fraternity event. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of Edwin J. Feiler Jr. in honor of Cari Feiler Bender.

Case 3:

Power and Control

Every aspect of life in this building existed within a system of control, confinement and a highly structured routine. Eastern State Penitentiary was a maximum-security prison, first and foremost.

Administrators purchased thousands of padlocks; nearly every cell in the penitentiary required one. Over time, new, more secure padlock models replaced the old.

Guards regularly searched cells for *contraband*: forbidden items. Contraband included handmade weapons, also called “shanks” or “shivs.” These weapons may have been used by inmates for personal protection, to resolve disputes, or simply as a threat to avoid trouble.

Guards took these weapons when they discovered them, and the administration’s collection grew to include dozens of examples. Officer Andreas Scheerer kept this collection as a souvenir when Eastern State closed in 1970, and his family returned it to the historic site in 1997. Only a fraction of the weapons in the collection are on display here.

In recent years, historic site staff members have discovered three additional shanks hidden in the building by prisoners. There are likely more yet to be discovered.



In this Case:

Key to the Original Front Door of Eastern State Penitentiary. The original door was in place from 1823 to 1937, when it was replaced by the steel gate and doors seen today. The key became a souvenir. “Front Gate” is stamped on handle. “ESP” is stamped at base of handle. “1823-1938” is stamped on shaft. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of Joseph B. Atkinson, Margaret Carter, and Suzanne Campbell.

Officer Sekula’s Name Tag, Small ESP Pin, Large Silver ESP Pin, and Officer’s Uniform Patch. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of Retiree Bernard M. Sekula, Correction Officer I.

Officer’s Gold Hat Pin. This brass insignia once adorned an officer’s hat at Eastern State. The Pennsylvania state seal appears in relief, and “ESP,” for Eastern State Penitentiary, at the bottom. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of an anonymous donor.

Officer’s Gold Buttons. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Officer’s Silver Buttons. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift in honor of Howard H. Haines, Captain of the Guards.

Star Padlock. Scandinavian-style jail padlock with a star on the base around keyhole. Made by Star Lock Works Company of Philadelphia. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Padlock Painted Institutional Green. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Padlock. Stamped with a “5” on center front of body, star marking around keyhole on base with a configuration of seven dots. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Yale Padlock, Black. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Yale Padlock, Brass. According to city Correction Officer Russell Schaefer, city employees using this prison as a temporary holding facility in 1971 discovered that state officers had left locks on all the prison doors, and the keys had been thrown into barrels in the center surveillance hub. Officer Schaefer states that city officers painstakingly tried the keys until they found one that worked for each cellblock. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Yale Key. All cells in a given cellblock opened with the same key. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Handcuffs. Stamped with laurel wreath pattern on one end, “HARD” on outer ring, and “BEST,” “3,” and “WARRANTED WROUGHT.” Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Keys to Cellblock 13: Cellblock 13, also called “Klondike,” consisted of 10 dark isolation cells. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Keys to Cellblock 14, Cellar. The basement of Cellblock 14 housed dark, remote isolation cells, one of two places in the prison called “Klondike.” Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of an anonymous donor.

Punitive Segregation Sign. Found at Eastern State Penitentiary after abandonment, this sign once marked the cells housing inmates kept alone as punishment. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Sword Shank with Sheath. A weapon made from half of a pair of scissors wrapped with electrical tape and canvas belt; the sheath is made of green canvas wrapped with masking tape and stitched with black thread. The canvas is stamped with “OFFICE.” Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Shank with Sheath, Flat Metal. The shaft is made of a flat piece of metal filed down to a double-edged blade. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Shank with Sheath, Rounded Handle. The handle is wrapped with black cloth tape and overlaid with string. The blade is possibly made of a file. The sheath is made of black cloth tape. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Shank with Masking-Tape Handle. Discovered by historic site staff in Cellblock 14, this weapon had been wedged into the base of a table for at least 40 years. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, found in 2012.

Shank with Tape Handle. This weapon is possibly made from a butter knife. The handle

is wrapped with yellowed cloth tape. One side of the blade is stamped “Stainless,” with a letter K, and another letter. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Shank with Tape Handle. The blade is stamped “MK Stainless.” Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Shank with Tape Handle. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Scissor Shank. The weapon is made from half of a pair of scissors. There is no evidence of further sharpening of the blade. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Kitchen Knife Shank. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Butter Knife Shank. “Commonwealth of Pennsylvania” is stamped on handle. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Curved Scissor and Tape Shank. The weapon is made of one half of a pair of scissors; the handle is made of black electrical tape. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Shank with Large Round Handle. Between the blade and handle is a saucer-like disk to protect the hand. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Spike Shank. This weapon is made out of a file. The blade has been filed down to a rhomboidal shape, tapering to a sharply defined point. The bottom of the blade and wooden handle are painted black, except for a band of the handle where wood color shows through. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Comb and Office File Shank. The metal blade has remnants of institutional green paint. The handle is a black pocket comb, attached to the blade with masking tape. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Shank with String Handle. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Letter Opener Shank. The leather is coming loose due to failing stitching. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Black Shank. The weapon is possibly made from a ruler or some instrument of flat metal. The handle has a hole in it. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Spoon Shank. This weapon is the only shank made from a spoon in the collection taken from inmates at Eastern State Penitentiary. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Pen Shank. This weapon is made from a ball-point pen. The pen handle is gold and brown false mother-of-pearl. The blade is implanted in the handle with a black adhesive, perhaps tar. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

File Shank. An inmate may have tooled this weapon by machine: marks indicate the shank was held in a vise. It is extremely sharp. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Shank Note. “I know where you can find a shank; it’s in 39 cell on six gallery. In back of the desk draw.” (“Gallery” is the second tier of cells, so the note indicates the weapon is hidden in cell number 39 on the upper floor of Cellblock 6.) The note is signed on the back: “H-4874.” Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Zip Gun. A “zip gun” is an improvised pistol. Zip guns typically use ground match heads as firing powder. Other designs require a real bullet, which is fired by striking the back of the shell. This example is made from wood and a length of threaded plumbing pipe. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the Scheerer Family.

Mug Shot of William “Blackie” Zupkosky. A gangster and prolific stickup man, Zupkosky was involved in a 1931 attack on rival gang members in Eastern State’s yard in which two inmates were stabbed with shanks. Zupkosky and four others were sent to solitary punishment cells. Both inmates survived the attack and were transferred to Western State Penitentiary in Pittsburgh. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of John P. Farley, Mary B. Maiden, James J. Farley, Kate Farley, and Bernard C. Farley.

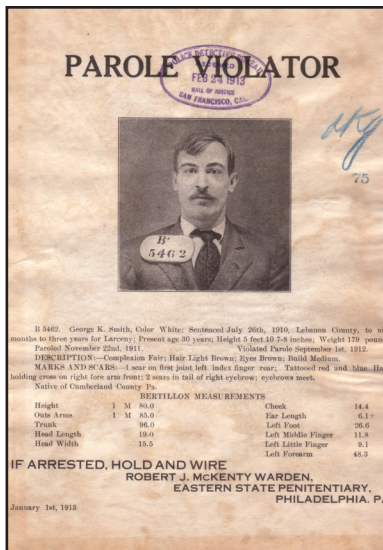
Case 4: *Getting Out*

The Death Ledger in this case lists more than 1,000 Eastern State Penitentiary inmates by inmate number and cause of death. Inmate B-3363, Isaac Whittaker Thompson, can be seen in the Mug Shot Book near the entrance to this exhibit. For many inmates serving Life Sentences, death was the *only* way out of Eastern State.

Other inmates literally escaped Eastern State. Although more than 100 inmates tunneled, climbed, or snuck their way to freedom, virtually all escaped Eastern State inmates were tracked down. Prison officials thwarted many escape attempts, such as the tunnel pictured here.

Most inmates eventually left Eastern State by just waiting. Tens of thousands of men and women completed their sentences and rejoined society outside these walls.

A few lucky inmates even left ahead of schedule: the Commutation Book in this case lists inmates whose prison sentences were reduced by the courts or elected officials. One inmate listed on this page, No. 8757, Milton Deibert, left by transfer to an insane asylum.



In this Case:

Death Ledger, 1830–1934. Open to the year 1907. Inmate B-3363's mug shot can be seen on Table 1 of this exhibit. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Photo: Eastern State Penitentiary Morgue. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift given in honor of Howard H. Haines, Captain of the Guards.

Photo: Escape Tunnel. Published by the *Boston Traveler*, 1940. The caption on the back reads, "Designed for Escape — Tunnel, with electric lights and all, dug and boarded by Eastern Penitentiary convicts in Philadelphia in hope of reaching freedom. The plot was nipped by prison officials." Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Escape Poster for Inmate C-1677, James Williams (Alias Howard Martin Keavin). Williams escaped in 1923 along with Leo Callahan, believed to be the only Eastern State inmate to avoid recapture. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Pardon for Inmate 5868, John Steeple. Signed by President Andrew Johnson, 1868. Some inmates convicted in federal courts in the 1800s were sent to Eastern State Penitentiary. John Steeple was convicted of stealing from the U.S. mail. He was pardoned due to his "good character" and his "large family dependent upon him for support." Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, gift of the family of John D. Shearer.

Parole Violator Poster for Inmate B-5462, George K. Smith. While receiving parole (a supervised release before the completion of a sentence) was one way to leave Eastern State, violating the conditions of parole could land an inmate back inside the walls. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

Commutation Book. Inmate 8260, Bernard "Barney" McCue, is thought to be the first prisoner sent to Eastern State Penitentiary on a Life Sentence. Collection of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.