CorrectionHistory.Org is honored to present The Westchester Historian’s Roberts J. Wright: The Story of Westchester County’s First Commissioner of Correction

By Anthony J. Czarnecki, Westchester DOC Chief of Staff (retired)

CorrectionHistory.Org is pleased and proud to be able to present retired Westchester County Department of Correction chief of staff Anthony J. Czarnecki’s biographical essay about Roberts J. Wright, the agency’s first commissioner. The Westchester County Historical Society (WCHS) and its quarterly publication, The Westchester Historian, graciously made available to this website from its Spring 2019 issue, the 25-page bio, with more than two dozen photos. The article helps to spotlight the 50th anniversary of Westchester merging its correctional services into a single county department. Historian editor / Westchester County Historical Society executive director Susanne Pandich’s “Dear Reader” intro explained:

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Westchester County Department of Correction. Its formation was a progressive idea to amalgamate the operations of the county jail, which was the jurisdiction of the Sheriff’s Department; the Penitentiary, which was overseen by the Department of Social Services; and the Women’s Unit, and put them under a new professional administration. Roberts J. Wright was chosen as the first commissioner... uniquely qualified by his experience in prison administration and his national reputation as a reformer... With the urgent conversation taking place in America today about incarceration, rehabilitation and social justice, it is interesting to read Commissioner Wright’s enlightened views on many of these issues 50 years ago. His writings are still relevant.

Long a booster of this website, Czarnecki helped it obtain in 2006 the okay to post a 9-part presentation of his “A Proper Regard for the Unfortunates: The Origins of the Jail System in Westchester County, N.Y.,” featured in that year’s Historian Spring issue. The article marked the 150th anniversary of the first jail opening in the county. The 9-parter included data and photos relating to NYC Correction. Having served as Westchester DOC Chief of Staff 25 years, he now heads The Chartwell Group USA, a criminal justice consulting firm. Past president of the State Probation Officers Association and Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association, he serves on the WCHS Board of Trustees. We thank him, WCHS and its staff for sharing this significant work on our website.

The package of WCHS Spring 2019 The Westchester Historian quarterly materials made available to this website included a three-page section, Books & Things, describing some of the Westchester history books available to order through WCHS. Among the authors of the listed works are the society’s librarian and associate director Patrick Raftery and the well-known regional NY historian, Field Horn.

LINKS NOTE: In addition to the Historian cover image (above right) which, if Ctrl-Clicked, will access the historical bio, color highlighted underlined phrases also will access relevant material. COPY RIGHT NOTE: While granting this website permission to post the materials presented, WCHS still retains all its relevant copy rights re the materials.

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