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## The Nineteenth Century British Workhouse: Mission Not Accomplished

Brenda Derin  
*Dominican University of California*

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**THE NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH WORKHOUSE:  
MISSION NOT ACCOMPLISHED**

**Brenda Derin**

**Major: Humanities and Cultural Studies**

**Dominican University of California**

**April 17, 2019**

**CHILDREN WHO WORKED WERE SUBJECT TO APPALLING CONDITIONS.  
MANY DIED BEFORE THEY REACHED 25.**



ANNABEL VENNING, "BRITAIN'S CHILD SLAVES," *THE DAILY MAIL*, SEPTEMBER 17, 2010.

[www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1312764/Britains-child-slaves-New-book-says-misery-helped-forge-Britain.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1312764/Britains-child-slaves-New-book-says-misery-helped-forge-Britain.html).

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

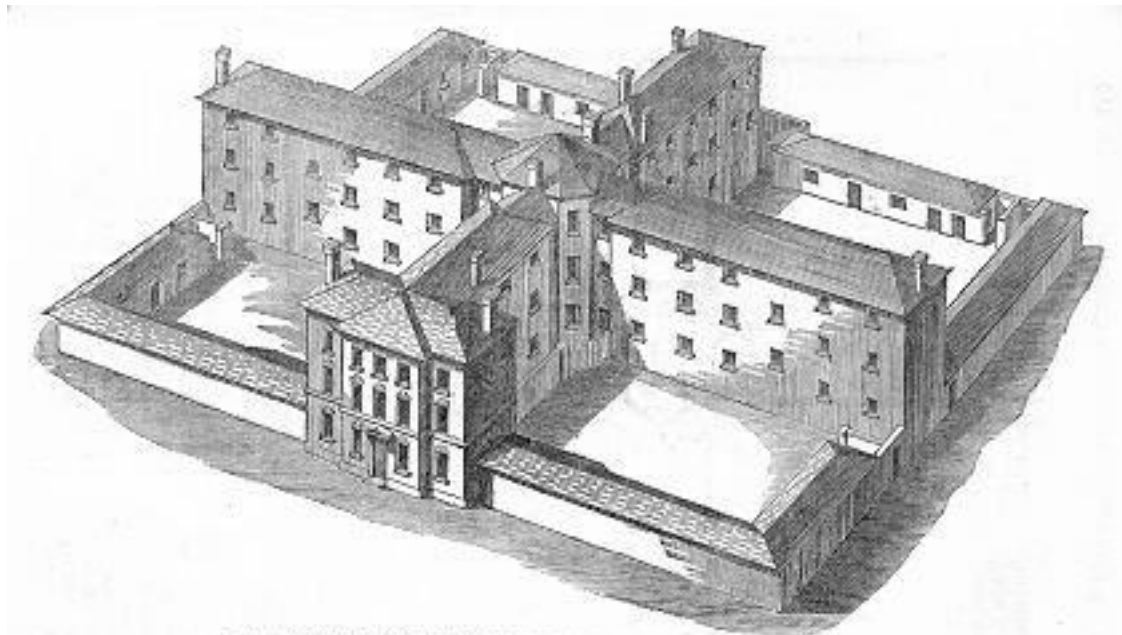
- Primary source documents
- British Parliamentary debates
- United Kingdom National Archives
- Medical journals
- Books and novels written about the workhouse
- Websites detailing workhouse culture
- Letters and journals by workhouse inhabitants

# WAITING...



Sir Luke Fildes, *Houseless and Hungry*, The Graphic, 1869.

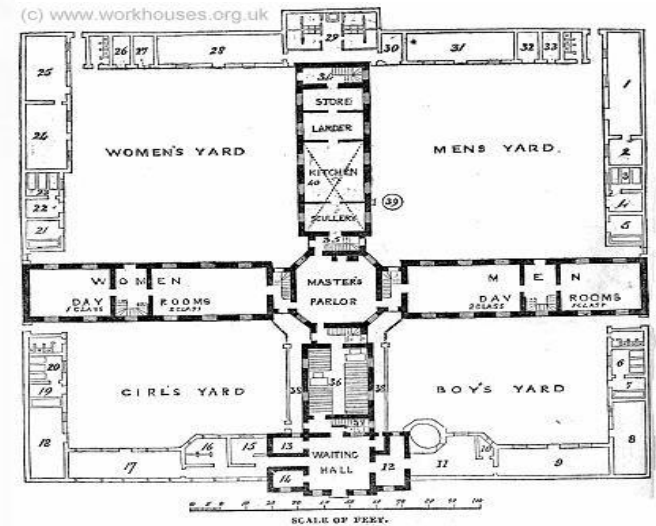
# Square plan - Workhouse architecture



PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF A WORKHOUSE FOR 300 PAUPERS. (F.)

SAMPSON KEMPTHORNE, Architect,  
CARLETON CHAMBERS, 15, ABENT STREET.

(c) www.workhouses.org.uk



- |                            |                            |   |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 1 Work Room.               | 15 Store.                  | 29 Piggery.                                 |
| 2 Store.                   | 16 Potatoes.               | 30 Slaughter House.                         |
| 3 Receiving Wards, 3 beds. | 17 Coals.                  | 31 Work Room.                               |
| 4 Bath.                    | 18 Work Room.              | 32 Refractory Ward.                         |
| 5 Washing Room.            | 19 Washing Room.           | 33 Dead House.                              |
| 6 Receiving Ward, 3 beds.  | 20 Receiving Ward, 3 beds. | 34 Women's Stairs to Dining Hall.           |
| 7 Washing Room.            | 21 Washing Room.           | 35 Men's Stairs to ditto.                   |
| 8 Work Room.               | 22 Bath.                   | 36 Boys' and Girls' School and Dining Room. |
| 9 Flour and Mill Room.     | 23 Receiving Ward, 3 beds. | 37 Delivery.                                |
| 10 Coals.                  | 24 Laundry.                | 38 Passage.                                 |
| 11 Bakehouse.              | 25 Wash-house.             | 39 Well.                                    |
| 12 Bread Room.             | 26 Dead House.             | 40 Cellar under ground.                     |
| 13 Searching Room.         | 27 Refractory Ward.        |   |
| 14 Porter's Room.          | 28 Work Room.              |   |



# BEGGARS



Scott Campbell, "Cinderella," *The Daily Mail*, August 21, 2017, [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4809114/Harrowing-images-Victorian-beggars-reveal-1800s-poverty.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4809114/Harrowing-images-Victorian-beggars-reveal-1800s-poverty.html).



John Thompson, Untitled, Bishopgate Institute, circa 1876, [historydaily.org/streets-of-victorian-london](http://historydaily.org/streets-of-victorian-london).



G.F.A. Best, *Shaftesbury*, 116, scanned by Jacqueline Banerjee, [www.victorianweb.org/genre/childlit/images/32.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/childlit/images/32.html).

# THE UPPER CLASSES GREW RESENTFUL OF GIVING CHARITY TO THOSE THEY FELT WERE UNWORTHY



Barnard, Fred, et al. "Scenes and Characters from the Works of Charles Dickens"  
London: Chapman & Hall, 1908. P. 562.



"Victorian London, Beggar and Rich Man, 1800's," from Janus Stephanowicz,  
Three Penny Opera Collection, Pinterest.



# SHOULD WE ENTER?



*The Famine in Ireland – Peasants at the Gate of a Workhouse, 1846, Berlin, Sammlung Archiv Fur Kunst Und Geschicte.*



# LESS ELIGIBILITY



*A View of the Poor House of Datchworth in Herts addressd. to the Overseers of England.*

Philip Thicknesse, "An account of the four persons found starved to death at D----- [i.e. Datchworth] in Hertfordshire. By one of the jurymen on the inquisition taken on their bodies," 1769.

# **MISSION STATEMENT OF THE WORKHOUSE:**

## **TO PROVIDE:**

1. Wholesome food
2. Sufficient Clothing
3. A better bed than the people were used to lie upon
4. A cleaner and better ventilated room than people were used to inhabit
5. An immediate supply of medical attendance in case of illness
6. And to establish a degree of order and cleanliness unknown in a laborer's cottage



# DID THE WORKHOUSE PROVIDE WHOLESOME FOOD?

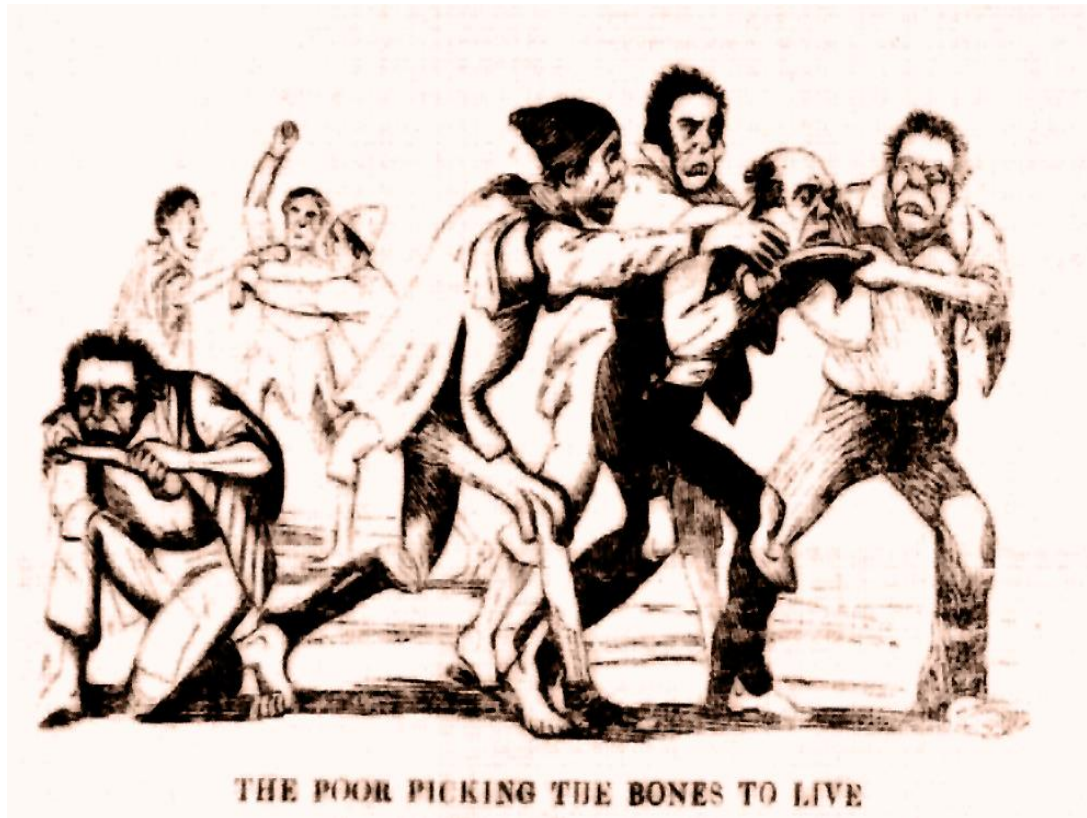


George Cruikshank, *Oliver Asking for More*, 1837. Scanned image by Simon Cooke,  
<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/cruikshank/ot2.html>.



# DID THE WORKHOUSE PROVIDE ENOUGH FOOD?

## WHOLESOME FOOD ANDOVER WORKHOUSE STARVATION SCANDAL



Hampshire History, <http://www.hampshire-history.com/andover-workhouse>.

# DID THE WORKHOUSE PROVIDE AN IMMEDIATE SUPPLY OF MEDICAL ATTENDANCE?

## PHOTOGRAPH OF A WORKHOUSE INFIRMARY



*Women's Ward, Whitechapel Infirmary, 1902, courtesy of Peter Higginbotham,  
[www.workhouses.org](http://www.workhouses.org).*

# ACTS OF MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE RESULTING IN DEATH



Illustration courtesy of Peter Higginbotham, <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Holbeach/>



# SATRIRICAL ILLUSTRATION OF WORKHOUSE



Charles Jameson Grant. *Interior of an English Workhouse under the New Poor Law Act.* British Museum.



# LEARNING A TRADE



Peter Higginbotham, "Holborn union's Mitcham workhouse shoemaking shop," 1896, [www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk).

# NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1948



*In 1952 a group of elderly people enjoy pocket skittles at The Vigo Inn, in Wrotham Kent. The National Archives, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/national-assistance.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/national-assistance.htm).*

# RIPON WORKHOUSE MUSEUM



Martin Webber, "Workhouse Museum," 12/2016.

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## HISTORY ROCKS!

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*Jamming Rock N Roll GIF, <https://giphy.com/explore/playing-guitar>*