



# Prisons, Asylums, and the Public: Institutional Visiting in the Nineteenth Century

*Janet Miron*

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The prisons and asylums of Canada and the United States were a popular destination for institutional tourists in the nineteenth-century. Thousands of visitors entered their walls, recording and describing the interiors, inmates, and therapeutic and reformatory practices they encountered in letters, diaries, and articles. Surprisingly, the vast majority of these visitors were not members of the medical or legal elite but were ordinary people.

*Prisons, Asylums, and the Public* argues that, rather than existing in isolation, these institutions were closely connected to the communities beyond their walls. Challenging traditional interpretations of public visiting, Janet Miron examines the implications and imperatives of visiting from the perspectives of officials, the public, and the institutionalized. Finding that institutions could be important centres of civic activity, self-education, and 'scientific' study, *Prisons, Asylums, and the Public* sheds new light on popular nineteenth-century attitudes towards the insane and the criminal.

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