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I.

Public support of relief recipients had assumed two basic forms in the United States by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The newer one, almshouse care, was increasing in popularity. The other approach, outdoor relief, involved the care of the needy outside of institutions.¹ Of the variety of arrangements embraced under the latter category, probably the most picturesque — on the surface at least — was the system of auctioning the care of paupers to the lowest bidder.

Only a Hogarth could have done justice to the scene, a gathering of the town worthies, often at the village inn, generally after the annual town meeting, at which the qualities of each pauper were detailed with the same callousness as that shown in discussing the merits of a horse — or a slave. One New Hampshire antiquarian recalled the auctioneer's description of a pauper subject to epileptic fits:

"Here is Mr. _____; he is a strong, hearty, sound man, who can eat anything, and a good deal of it; how much do you bid?"²

To add to the festivity of the occasion (and to stimulate bidding) liquor was furnished at the expense of the town in some places. New Jersey banned the giving or selling of liquor at auctions in 1797, but specifically exempted auctions conducted by any civil officer.³

What could be more logical, at a time when many public offices were being auctioned, than that the welfare function of the community should also go on the block? The advantages of auctioning the poor were obvious — perhaps too much so. Two New York towns, Cazenovia and Chazy, boasted of a great savings — one-third and two-thirds of previous expenses, respectively. For, as the supervisor of Chazy observed, "none except those that are objects of charity, will apply to the town for assistance, and be exposed for sale, and liable to labor."⁴ Friends of the bid-off

system claimed an influential supporter in New Hampshire's Governor Plumer, who thought that the vendue was "the most eligible and cheapest method" for rural areas. By putting the poor with private families, they would be well cared for, and industry would be insisted on.⁶

Many persons, however, were alive to the barbarity and inhumanity of the system.⁶ Often the successful bidder was himself on the verge of requiring public assistance.⁷ A premium was placed on meanness and avarice; with what horrible consequences to the unfortunate pauper, can only be imagined, when he was placed in the hands of "a man of great faith in the ability of paupers to live on almost nothing, to suffer almost everything, and to be contented with almost anything."⁸ In the scathing words of a committee of the board of supervisors of Onondaga County, New York,⁹ the successful bidder learned too late that:

he has been duped by his own cupidity overreached by the chicancery of others and that the pitiful reward of his unhallowed competition will warrant no better support to the pauper the miserable subject of the inhuman trade than the thin potations and meagre diet usually provided for the guests of a pesthouse.

II.

To salve the conscience of the community, the overseers might be expected to visit the poor regularly and see to it that they were treated well, as was the case in New Shoreham, Rhode Island. Or, as in Burrillville, Rhode Island, the bidder might have to give security that he would keep the poor "in a christianlike manner."¹⁰

Another factor which mitigated the harshness of the system was that it was not used exclusively, even where it prevailed. In New Hampshire, for example, where vendue was the usual mode of caring for the poor, persons needing only occasional aid would be granted it, in amounts depending on the discretion of the overseers. Thus, persons only partly supported at the expense of the town received \$100 of the \$295 spent on the poor by Hampton in 1824. In Holderness (1830) Widow Stewart who "about supports herself" received \$1.56, James Curry, who though suffering

from "want of faculty" had to provide for a wife and three children, got \$5.55 in relief, and industrious, but infirm, Mr. Wiggin was given the "little assistance" he needed for his family. Even cases requiring full assistance were sometimes not auctioned. Most of Andover's paupers were put on the block, but some old people were placed out by contract; in Alstead and Concord, on the other hand, most of the poor were contracted for rather than auctioned. Alton spent \$20 in furnishing Widow Davis with a house and wood (1820), and two years later the town voted to give Daniel Wentworth a dollar a week to care for his mother. Similarly, Grafton accepted Mary Casewell's offer to keep her mother for fifty-eight cents a week (1824), while Moses Hunt of Bath was given \$15 for the support of his son (1829). Sometimes, as at Gilford in 1818 and Grafton in 1828, it was left up to the selectmen to decide which of the poor were to be vendued, and which to be disposed of otherwise.¹¹ Lewiston, Maine, not infrequently reconsidered the vote to auction all the poor, as regarded certain paupers, and decided at the town meeting to let the overseers of the poor provide for them.¹²

Lee, Massachusetts, had sold the care of Marcy Backus to Samuel Porter for 5s.9d (over ninety cents) per week, but the very next month, it was noted: "Marcy Backus being uneasy with living at Samuel Porters [the town] voted that the Selectmen provide for her." Humanity triumphed again in the case of William James, a hapless physician who was totally disabled by a cut from an axe. A petition by the citizenry to the overseers of the poor of Staunton, Virginia, requested that "in this singularly hard Instance" the usual procedure of auctioning the pauper be omitted, and he be given a reasonable amount of help; the overseers acceded.¹³

Those with ties of family or friends would sometimes be shown consideration. North Bridgewater, Massachusetts, voted (1822) to "put out at public auction or private sale" only those persons who could not find a place with a friend, or who had no homes, a procedure which was also followed in Gloucester, Rhode Island.¹⁴ It should be borne in mind, too, that a pauper might be bid off to his mother, child or some other relative.¹⁵

Though the system of auctioning the poor was not an

unmitigated evil in some places at some times, yet it was fundamentally and generally a cruel one. Perhaps no community pursued the goal of economical support of the poor with such great industry as did West Greenwich, Rhode Island. Here until 1809, most paupers were let out on a monthly basis! During 1790, for example, unfortunate William Hines found himself in January at Henry Matteson's place, in February at Eleazar Burlingame's, in March at Jonathan Bennett's, in May at Daniel Howard's, in October at Thomas Tillinghast's, and in November again at Matteson's. No auction had taken place in April, July and September. His weekly-cost to the town varied from two shillings (thirty-three cents) in March, to 5s.10d. (ninety-seven cents) in November.¹⁶ Andover, New Hampshire, was using quarterly bids in 1797, with the result that Widow Elkins lodged with four different persons during the year, while Widow Sibley enjoyed the hospitality of four different housekeepers in Fremont (1796).¹⁷

Another of the distressing aspects of the bid-off system was the break-up of families which it frequently entailed. Thus in March, 1825, Manchester, New Hampshire, in accordance with a vote of the town, put Majory Boyes and her four children in five different homes.¹⁸

III.

A prime consideration in bidding on a pauper was the amount of labor which could be expected from him. The lowest bidder understood that in return for the maintenance he gave the town charge, he could make use of the pauper's labor power.¹⁹ In the words of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts (1822):

A town has undoubtedly a right to the services of a pauper to aid in his support. So has any person who may have become liable for his support by virtue of a contract with the town.²⁰

We find then such instances as Joshua Dix being taken (in 1814) for five cents a week, in Waltham, Massachusetts; John Williams being "Bid Down" to \$7 a year by Doctor Charles Powers in Shapleigh, Maine (1801); Ishmael Nichols of West Greenwich, Rhode Island, taking

Christiana Lampher for one dollar for the year 1801; and Pauline Smith of Manchester, New Hampshire, going at a cost to the town of \$8 (1821).²¹ Sometimes the town would just break even, and not have to pay anything at all for a pauper.²²

Cases occurred where premiums would be paid to a town for the privilege of using a pauper's labor. Thus Bristol, New Hampshire, received \$25 for Elijah Truell (1828) and \$15 for his brother Samuel; both were *non compos mentis*. Two years later, Samuel cost the town \$4.50 for the year, but Elijah's labor yielded \$40. Richmond, New Hampshire, was given an unusually large amount for a pauper in 1812: \$1.06 a week for John Whitcher. Fremont, New Hampshire, had a profitable pauper in the person of insane Ephraim Abbot. He cost the town \$79.41 in 1820-1821, but in 1822 he yielded the town two and half cents a week, and in 1823, eighty cents a week. A decade later a dollar a week was being paid for him, and the successful bidder agreed that "in case of sickness or any disability . . . the Selectmen are to be notified before any extra expenses will be allowed or his wages stopped." On the same conditions, Abbot sold for a return of \$1.21 a week in 1834, \$1.14 a week in 1835 and \$1.20 a week in 1836. This continued until 1852 (from 1839 on, though the auction was replaced by "proposals" for keeping Abbot each year) when his brother-in-law was appointed his guardian. The money which the town had received for the pauper's labor was demanded by his guardian on his behalf, and the case reached the Supreme Court of the state. There this claim was rejected on the ground that just as a pauper was not bound by an implied contract to repay the town, if he should subsequently be able to do so, so "any benefit the town may derive from his [pauper's] labor belongs to them, as incident to the relation of a pauper on the town."²³

Samuel Truell, mentioned earlier, was not the only pauper who, once a source of revenue to the town, became a source of expense. Bridgewater, New Hampshire, received from one cent to twelve and a half cents a week for Elizabeth Craig during the years 1831 through 1835; but in 1836 she cost the town twenty-nine cents a week. Mary

Wares, to take another example, appeared on the pauper list of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, for the first time in 1790, when she cost the town 27s. (\$4.50) for the year. In 1792, her expense was as much as £3/16s (\$11); but in 1797 and 1798, she brought 3d. a week to the town. Again in 1799, she was bid off at a cost of 6d. per week, and in 1800 her cost was 5d. per week. Nothing was paid for her in 1801, and in 1802 the town received £2/2s for her services for the year. But from 1803 until her death (around 1817) she was a net expense, in some years merely nominal sums being paid for her keep, and in later years \$30 and more.²⁴

IV.

These paupers who fetched a premium were presumably mentally or physically defective persons, who were town wards for as long as they lived. Some, however, might have been in a situation similar to that of Parker Marshall, a lazy fellow inclined to drinking, the father of six youngsters. In 1824, he and his family were sold for \$51.42 for the year. This may have proved a chastening experience for him; the next year the selectmen of Hancock, New Hampshire, found that his habits had improved "in some measure," and he was supporting himself.²⁵

The contracts that Durham, New Hampshire made with the successful bidders specified that in the event the paupers' inability to gain a livelihood was "so remov'd as that they may be able or wish to procure their own subsistence," the selectmen might grant the paupers' request, and leave them to shift for themselves. Similarly in Bridgewater the care of Polly Crawford and her son were bid off for thirteen cents per week with the proviso that "she is to have the Liberty of Supporting her Self if She will."²⁶

Generally the persons vendued were already chargeable to the town. But there are instances on record where an anticipated applicant was auctioned, as in Bath, New Hampshire (1824), when Maxi Heseltine and family were bid off for \$20, and it was specified that if Heseltine "should not call on the town for assistance" the bidder was not to receive anything; at the same auction Mrs. Sweetzer was bid

off for \$43, on the same condition. Mrs. Woodbury of Canaan, New Hampshire, went for thirty-eight cents a week (1815), "when she makes application for assistance from the town."²⁷

Some localities with a mixed system probably utilized the vendue as a sort of punishment. Northampton, Massachusetts, decided (1802) to provide for those who had become poor because of illness or misfortune, "in the usual manner among their friends & Connections where everything comfortable and necessary may be provided for them at the expense of the Town," while those impoverished by their vices were to be kept at the lowest rate, at least two miles from the center of the town. The selectmen of Gilmanton, New Hampshire, were directed (1815) to auction those poor who brought themselves or their families to want by intemperance "or other open vices." At the same time they were *authorized* to auction any other paupers, as they thought proper. This practice continued for some years; the 1821 instructions to the selectmen were to "vendue such of the poor as in their opinion would be proper and best."²⁸

V.

Generally the poor were struck off individually, or all went to the house of the lowest bidder. Sometimes they were sold in "lots" of unrelated persons. Thus at North Providence (1810), five paupers went to Captain Smith, two to William Hopkins, and two to Elisha Brown; Gilmanton, New Hampshire, sold its poor in four lots (1829), while the annual town meeting of Baldwin, Maine, ordered (1843) that the poor "be disposed of in parcels to the lowest bidders."²⁹ The paupers of Cumberland, Rhode Island, were boarded separately until 1807, when Absalom Ballou took all of the town's poor for \$600 (except the Gould children, who were left with their parents), he being the lowest bidder and "a suitable person to maintain the poor." The town reverted to the old system of venduing each pauper separately in 1810, but the next year again made a contract with one man. Tiverton and Scituate, Rhode Island, witnessed similar vacillation of policy.³⁰ Warren, to take a Maine example, found itself

with a large pauper list, as an aftermath of the War of 1812 and the policy of giving home relief. The town adopted the practice of letting out all the poor on contract (1821), only to go back to the former practice in the 1840's, and, we are told, another great increase in poor expenditures occurred.³¹

Under a single contractor arrangement, just as under an individual pauper vendue, the poor were expected to work for the low bidder. Benjamin Coffin was "entitled to the labour of sd paupers," when he was given \$371 (1827) by Alton, New Hampshire, for caring for them. Candia, New Hampshire, which gave its poor home relief before 1821, found poor expenditures cut almost in half when it adopted the lowest contractor system. Most of the paupers preferred to provide for themselves rather than to be subjected to "strict discipline in one house." Shades of the poorhouse system! The good people of Andover, in the next county, alarmed over the great increase in pauperism in the town, decided on a set of rules:

calculated to punish Sloth and indolence [by starving the culprit] correct vice and immorality established industry, teach economy and prudence incourage virtue and morality and establish at the same time the means of support on the most Just and equinomical principles So that he who will not work may not eat.

These rules were to be enforced by the contractor who took all the poor on the lowest bid basis.³² Indeed, the difference between this sort of contractor arrangement, and the system whereby the care of the poor at a town farm, was given to one accepting the lowest price per pauper or the smallest lump sum, lay solely in the fact that in the latter case the house for the poor belonged to the town, whereas in the former, it belonged to the contractor.³³

Venturesome entrepreneurs were to be found, like Joseph Penniman of Paxton, Massachusetts, who agreed to take "all the Paupers belonging to s^d Town together with all which may legally come in, in the course of the year coming" for \$489 in 1828, and \$387 in 1829. The liability of such an open-end contract to disastrous consequences to the bidder (and consequently to the poor) is obvious, but at least

one instance is known where a contractor was compensated for the loss he suffered in supporting the town poor: Jeremiah Durgin received \$125 from Limerick, Maine, in 1838, in addition to the \$340 for which he had originally bargained.³⁴

Another type of agreement provided that a definite number of poor were to be cared for at the stipulated price, as when the seven paupers of Tewksbury, New Jersey, were taken for \$400 (1817). Sometimes the contractor received a fixed amount per pauper — Howell Township, New Jersey, for instance, accepted a bid of \$1.50 a week per person (1840).³⁵ Howell reserved the right to maintain whichever poor it cared to, at their own homes. This would be done when the cost of home relief was less than the cost at the contractor's and of course benefited the town rather than the contractor. Some open-end contractors found it financially attractive to give home relief. Deerfield, Massachusetts, paid \$475 a year for the care of its poor, for most of whom the contractor saw fit to give small allowances at their dwellings. The contractor of Durham, New Hampshire, likewise gave some outside assistance.³⁶

VI.

Auctioning the care of paupers to the lowest bidder antedated the Revolution, but came into widespread favor only later,³⁷ perhaps as communities were confronted with increasing burdens of dependency. While the system originated in New England, and probably was used there more extensively than in any other region,³⁸ the blessings of the vendue system were enjoyed by localities in many different places at one time or another. Among the Atlantic States, only in Maryland and Delaware, has the author been unable to find allusions to the use of this arrangement. The 1799 poor law of the Northwest Territory specifically authorized the auction. In Illinois the practice continued even after the law dropped its reference to the vendue (1827). Missouri localities still employed the vendue in the 1850's and subsequently.³⁹

Defenders of the institution of slavery who compared the treatment given slaves in the South, with that given paupers

in abolitionist New England, conveniently overlooked the fact that the South too used the vendue system. In Virginia, Giles County found (1829) that under the lowest bid system, the poor were not taken care of, and in some other cases the overseers of the poor were being imposed on; a similar story was related in Halifax County. North Carolina, made very extensive use of the system. Chester and Newberry were among the South Carolina districts auctioning the poor. Some Georgia counties also gave the care of the poor to the lowest bidder.⁴⁰

The device of auctioning paupers had probably passed the peak of its popularity by 1834, when Indiana became the first state to ban the practice by law. Maine, in an 1847 law, prohibited what had hitherto been the prevalent mode of supporting the poor. New York followed suit the very next year (despite this, we read of auctions as late as 1859), while North Carolina, the only other Atlantic state to legislate on the subject, waited until 1877.⁴¹ Chief Justice Ewing of New Jersey pronounced venduing contrary to "the sound principles, real design, and generous provision" of the poor laws (1825). In Pennsylvania, venduing the poor was an indictable offense, after the overseers of Union Township (Mifflin County) were sentenced sometime before 1826 for the practice, but Dorothea Dix reported its use in many places in 1845.⁴² In 1850, nine of the thirty-one towns in Rhode Island were still auctioning their poor. Danbury, Connecticut, stopped doing so only in 1859. The 1860 town meeting of Danville, New Hampshire, featured a vendue of paupers. Although the auction had not entirely disappeared by the 1850's, it had certainly lost its former importance.⁴³ Other methods had supplanted this picturesque procedure.

FOOTNOTES

1 See the author's doctoral dissertation, "Public Poor Relief in America", ch. II, III (Columbia University, 1952). Pauper auctions are called the "New England method" in New York State Assembly, *Journal 1824*, appendix B, p. 33, hereafter referred to as Yates.

2 Albert Smith, *History of the Town of Peterborough* (Boston, 1876), p. 179. Cf. Albert Deutsch, *The Mentally Ill in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), pp. 117-18.

3 On liquor, see Albert Smith, *op cit.*, p. 179; Seth Chandler, *History of the Town of Shirley, Massachusetts* (Shirley, 1883), p. 142; George Faber Clark, *History of the Town of Norton, Bristol County, Massachusetts* (Boston, 1859), p. 365; Levi Leonard, *History of Dublin, N. H.* (Boston, 1855), pp. 26-27. N. J. Acts . . . c. 629. The law was not repealed until 1934, c. 32.

4 Yates, pp. 11, 33. Other comments on the vendue system appear on pp. 25, 47.

5 *Portsmouth Journal*, June 9, 1827, article on pauperism signed "Cincinattus," reprinted in *Niles' Weekly Register*, XXXII (1827), 312, where the authorship is stated to be Governor Plumer's. Joseph B. Felt, the Salem historian, on the other hand, could find no other objection to venduing than that "the disorderly among the poor often [are] thrown into hands unfitted to hold a proper restraint upon them." [*History of Ipswich, Essex and Hamilton* (Cambridge, 1834), p. 67].

6 Dorothea L. Dix, *Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts*, 1843, reprinted in *Old South Leaflets*, VI, no. 18 (Boston [ND]), pp. 22-23. "Barbarous" was the epithet used by the grand jury of Chester District, South Carolina, to describe the system (1842). [Quoted in Richard B. Morris, "White Bondage in Antebellum South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* XLIX (1948), 199]. No attention was paid by Maine's towns to the lowest bidder's "disposition or capability . . . to provide for their paupers' wants in a suitable manner." [Maine Legislature, House Documents, 1835, no. 20, p. 5]. To Chief Justice Kirkpatrick of New Jersey, selling the poor was "in the very face of all the laws of decency and humanity . . ." [Board et al v. Cronk (1822), 6 N. J. Law Reports (2nd ed.), 143, 148.] Samuel Church, *Historical Address . . . Salisbury* (New Haven, 1842), p. 70. Connecticut, *Documents 1852*, no. 1, pp. 18-19, for Governor Seymour's statement; see also Seymour's 1853 Message, pp. 13-14.

7 On this point Yates remarked that often the lowest bidder took on the care of a pauper as a means of avoiding that state himself: "Thus, he, and another miserable human being, barely subsist on what would hardly comfortably maintain himself alone — a species of economy much boasted of by some of our town officers and purchasers of paupers . . ." (p. 391) Hendrick B. Wright recalled that paupers "would be generally struck off to some mountaineer, living in a log hut, and the town contribution would sustain pauper and purchaser." [*Historical Sketches of Plymouth, Luzerne Co., Penn.* (Philadelphia [1873]), p. 264.]

8 S. H. Elliot, *A Look at Home; or Life in the Poor-House of New England . . .* A veritable, no fiction of life among the

lowly (new and revised ed.; New York, 1860), p. 35. Thomas R. Hazard, in his *Report on the Poor and Insane in Rhode Island* (Providence 1851), p. 87 (cited hereafter as Hazard) remarked that out of the vendue system "have grown some of the most dreadful abuses that have ever been perpetrated by man on his fellow man." His description of nightmarish conditions at Coventry, R. I., is on pp. 49-51. Henry Maurice Lisle, *Address delivered . . . in Roxbury . . .* (Boston, 1808), p. 15. David Thurston, *A Brief History of Winthrop* (Portland, 1855), p. 32. Hammond asserted (Yates, p. 77) that the poor "in many instances" were treated "more like beasts than like human beings." Dorothea Dix was told in Pennsylvania that some poor fared well, but in many other cases, especially among the old and helpless "neglect and suffering . . . were of frequent occurrence." [Memorial . . . to the Legislature of Pennsylvania . . . (Philadelphia, 1845), pp. 15-16.]

9 Onandaga County, N. Y. Board of Supervisors, Minutes November 24, 1826 (MS, labelled "Leger," County Court House, Syracuse).

10 Hazard, p. 36. The 1815 town meeting of Gilmanton passed a resolution stating that "no person shall bid off the keeping of said paupers, unless he is able to provide comfortably for them . . ." [Town Records, IV, March 4, 1815. (MS, N. H. Secretary of State, Concord).]

11 Yates, p. 92. Poor Returns of Various Towns (MS, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord); Town Records, *passim* (MS., N. H. Secretary of State). Unless otherwise specified, subsequent N. H., references are to these Town Records. In Westfield, Mass., state paupers, instead of being auctioned, would be placed with whomever was willing to keep them for the amount the state gave, or the pauper himself would be given the sum at his home. [Massachusetts, House of Representatives, *Documents* 1833, no. 6, p. 89].

12 Lewiston, Me., Records I, April 1, 1833, and earlier (MS, City Hall). The town of Union, Mass., frequently instructed the selectmen to provide for certain paupers without putting them up at auction. [John Langdon Sibley, *History of the Town of Union*, (Boston, 1851), p. 272].

13 Lee, Mass., *Records of the Town . . . to A.D. 1801* (Lee, 1900), p. 89. MS, Staunton, 1796 (Duke University).

14 Bradford Kingman, *History of North Bridgewater . . .* (Boston, 1866), p. 345. Hazard, p. 37. Of the 21 persons on the poor list of Shrewsbury, N. J., in 1798, one pauper was given 30 bushels of grain, and another, \$6 to keep her lame child for the year, while the rest were auctioned. [Town Poor Book, MS, State Archives, Trenton].

15 Thus in 1801, of the six paupers vendued in Howell Township, N. J., one was taken by his mother, and another by a relative [Minutes I], while several mothers cared for their own children in Kingwood Township, N. J. [Minutes, April 1820] (MS, Trenton). In Pasquotank County, N. C., a number of children were bid off to their mothers, and some other paupers went with relatives [Wardens, Minutes April 8, 1822, April 12, 1823, April 8, 1824, etc.]. "Joseph Screws, son of John Screws was bid off by his father . . . at six pounds," in Duplin County, N. C. [Wardens Minutes, July 22, 1800] (MS, State Archives, Raleigh). Fall River, Mass., town meeting minutes of August 20, 1816 has the entry "The Davis

family was bid off by Sally Davis for 120 Dols pr year." North Hempstead, N. Y., changed from individual to group vendue because under the former, the poor generally were placed with their "connexions." [Yates, p. 54.]

16 West Greenwich, R. I., Town Council Minutes, III, 1790. In May, 1805, the town decided to replace the old system with one of yearly auctions, but three months later, this was rescinded and the town council was empowered to let out the poor "To the lowest Bidder whom they shall judge to be of Competent Ability to support them in a Decent Manner," for a month, or a longer period, as the council judged most convenient. Finally, in December, 1809, Thomas Whitford's home was rented as the poorhouse, with the town instructing the visiting overseers to see that the poor were not "abused by Hunger or cold or cruelly." [Town Meeting Book, 1809 (MS, State Archives, Providence)]. For a Vermont example of frequent changes in the person caring for the pauper, see Lorenzo D'Agostino, *History of Public Welfare in Vermont* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), p. 98.

17 Edgecomb County, N. C., on the other hand, secured legislative authorization to let out its poor for a three-year term. [N. C., 1799, c. 45.]

18 Manchester Historic Association, *Collections XI* (Manchester, 1909), 218. In Baldwin, Me., to cite another example, Benjamin Brown took John Rowe, while Rowe's wife and children were bid off to Jonathan Sanborn. The town got \$2.25 a month for John, but his family cost it \$2 a week. (Baldwin Town Records, November 10, 1817.) (MS, Maine Historical Society, Portland.)

19 An agreement made by Bridgewater, N. H., read: "Those who take any of the town's poor are entitled to their reasonable services [and] they are to provide them suitable meats, drinks, lodging and nursing if they should be sick." [Town Records, II, March, 1830]. Similarly, Margaret Dearwell agreed to keep Sarah Dodge for 50 cents a week "In consideration of said Sarah being of some service to me." [Bridgewater Township, N. J., Minutes, April 24, 1826]. In North Providence, R. I. it was specified that the successful bidder was "to have the benefit of what labour they [paupers] or any of them shall do within the said term." [Town Meeting Record, June 8, 1809, and June 4, 1810]. Other references for this point include, e.g., Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 396; Ebenezer Alden, *History of Randolph [Mass.]* . . . [a scrapbook in the Massachusetts State Library, originally in the *Randolph Transcript*, November 21, 1857].

20 *Wilson vs. Church et al.*, 18 Mass., Reports, 23, 26.

21 Waltham Selectmen, "Book of Record," May 2, 1814. Shapleigh Town Records, March 9, 1801. West Greenwich, R. I., Town Council Minutes, November 24, 1800. Manchester Historic Association, *Collections* (Manchester, 1909) XI, 116.

22 Deranged Hannah Carlton was sold for "a little more than enough to clothe her." [Rindge, N. H., Poor Return 1830]. Bridgewater, N. H., Town Records, II, March, 1826, 1827, 1829 for Ruth Converse. Eaton, N. H., Town Records, II, March, 1823; (MS, N. H. Secretary of State) when Abraham Kineson was sold to Eleazar Kineson for nothing; in March, 1824, Seth Snell went to Alden Snell for nothing. Athol, Mass., Town Meeting Minutes, March 6, 1815 (Cyrenius Mitchell) (MS, Athol). Hollis, Me., Town Records, I, March 11, 1822 (MS, Maine Historical Society)

(Rachael Haley). West Greenwich, R. I., Town Council Minutes, January 31, 1814 (Arnold Ellis); April 25, 1814 (Christiana Lampher). (MS, State Archives, Providence).

23 *Abbott vs. the Town of Fremont* (1857), 34 N. H. Reports, 432, 436.

24 *The Old Records of the Town of Fitchburg, Massachusetts* (Fitchburg, 1901), IV, 132, 167, 189, 222, 252, etc.

25 Hancock, N. H., Poor Return 1824.

26 Durham, N. H., Select Men's Book of Contracts, vendue contracts 1817-1832, *passim* (MS, N. H., Historical Society). Bridgewater, N. H., Town Records, II, March 13, 1821.

27 Bath, N. H., Town Records, V, March 9, 1824, and March 8, 1825 (Hannah Hunt). Canaan, N. H., Town Records II, March, 1815. Nathaniel Snow's children were vendued "if they should be chargeable to the town in future." [Bethlehem, N. H., Town Book, I, November, 1816. (MS, N. H., Historical Society)].

28 Northampton, Mass., Records, IV, April 5, 1802 (MS, City Hall). Gilmanton, N. H., Town Records, IV, March, 1815, 1821. The records of Person County, N. C., include a case of a free Negro who "when being offered to the lowest bidder . . . withdrew himself & refused to become a parishner." [Minutes of Wardens, April 18, 1807].

29 North Providence, R. I., Town Meeting Record, June 4, 1810. Gilmanton, N. H., 1829. Baldwin, Me., Town Records, March 6, 1843. An exception was made for Dolly Dyer of Baldwin, who received 50 cents a week for her own support.

30 Cumberland, R. I., Town Meeting Minutes, I, June 1, 1807; June 4, 1810, June 3, 1811. On Tiverton and Scituate, see Margaret Creech, *Three Centuries of Poor Relief Administration, A Study of Legislation in Rhode Island* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1936]).

31 Cyrus Eaton, *Annals of the Town of Warren* (Hallowell, 1851), pp. 301, 311.

32 Alton, N. H., Town Records, March 14, 1827. Candia Poor Return, 1824. Andover, N. H., Town Records, I, March 13, 1821, March 13, 1827. West Greenwich, R. I., had the contractor taking all the poor "Provide Materials for the poor," and "alot to each a Reasonable Task." [Town Meeting Book, December 5, 1809].

33 As devoted a friend of the poorhouse system as the Reverend Joseph Tuckerman noted with satisfaction the evolution in Massachusetts towns without poor farms, from the individual vendue to the group vendue. [Massachusetts, House of Representatives, *Documents* 1833, no. 6, pp. 28-29]. Already in 1824 a trend had been discerned in a number of Atlantic states, away from older outdoor relief arrangements (boarding a poor person with a friend, or at home, and the individual vendue) to the poorhouse system, and one where "the permanent paupers are . . . collected together and boarded by one person at the lowest rate." [Portsmouth Town Records, 1821-1833, pp. 122-123 (April 13, 1824)].

34 Paxton, Mass., Selectmen's Journal, April 7, 1828, April 7, 1829 (MS, Baker Library, Harvard University). See also, e.g., Baldwin, Me., Town Records, March 5, 1825, when Eleazar Man took all those who were then and who would become chargeable during the year 1825, for \$384; and Limerick, Me., Records, April, 1837 (MS, Maine Historical Society). In April 1833, John Hack-

enbury made a similar arrangement with Kingwood Township, N. J., for \$1,000, excluding doctors' bills. In 1838, Edward Fox took the contract for only \$488.25, but by 1844, the town was paying \$558. (Minutes, April 1833 through 1844).

35 Tewksbury Township, N. J., Minutes, April, 1817. Howell Township, N. J., Minutes III, February, 1840. The poor of South Hempstead, N. Y., were bid off to a tavern keeper, at \$1 a week for each. [New York State Assembly, Documents 1844, I, No. 21, p. 107].

36 Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth, *Abstract of the Returns of the Overseers of the Poor* . . . 1845, p. 5; *ibid.*, 1847, p. 5. Durham Poor Return, 1831.

37 Marcus Wilson Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America 1607-1783* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 208. In Great Britain, Sulgrave vendued the aged and infirm; at Yardley, Hastings, the unemployed men were auctioned weekly. "In many places the roundsmen system is effected by means of an auction . . ." The roundsmen were able-bodied paupers who were hired out from farm to farm, under one variant of the Speenhamland System. (Great Britain, Poor Law Board, *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834) p. 32.

38 Henry Cabot Lodge, *Short History of the English Colonies in America* (Rev. ed.; New York, 1900), p. 441. On the vendue in New Jersey and Pennsylvania see Dorothea L. Dix's Memorials to the Legislatures of those states.

39 Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, *The Illinois Poor Law and its Administration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press [1939]), pp. 13, 62-64. Fern Boan, *History of Poor Relief Legislation and Administration in Missouri* ([Chicago]: University of Chicago Press, 1941), p. 44.

40 Thomas Prentice Kettell, *Southern Wealth and Northern Profits* . . . (New York, 1860), pp. 110-111. D. R. Handley, *Social Relations in our Southern States* (New York, 1860), p. 258. In the novel, *A Look at Home*, a lawyer asked his fellow-townsmen: "Do you like it 'exactly' that we should sell them [the poor] off as slaves, and disenfranchise them? Don't we give our Southern folks a chance to talk 'Turkey' against us?" [S. H. Elliot, *op. cit.*, p. 430]. One writer conceded that vendue was no longer in use in New England, but asked the abolitionists to admit that masters no longer mal-treated their slaves. ["A Northern Man," *The Planter or Thirteen Years in the South* (Philadelphia, 1853), p. 135].

Poor Returns, 1829 for Giles and Halifax Counties, Va. (MS, State Archives, Richmond). *The American Almanac and Repository of Useful Knowledge, for the Year 1838* (p. 230) implies that the system of venduing the poor was in use throughout North Carolina, before almshouses became the fashion. See also Guion Griffis Johnson, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), p. 693. On South Carolina auctioning of the poor, see Richard B. Morris, *loc. cit.*, p. 199; Robert Mills, *Statistics of South Carolina* . . . (Charleston, 1826), p. 647. Adiel Sherwood, *Gazetteer of the State of Georgia* (3rd ed.; Washington City, 1837), p. 327.

41 Alice Shaffer et. al., *The Indiana Poor Law* (Chicago: Uni-

versity of Chicago Press, [1936], p. 24. Maine House of Representatives, *Documents* 1835, no. 20, p. 5; Me., 1847, c. 12. N. Y., 1848, c. 76. Venduing was the practice in Hempstead and Jamaica, Queens County, and Islip in Suffolk County, reported J. H. French [*Gazeteer of the State of New York* . . . (Syracuse, 1860), pp. 547, 548, 636]. In April, 1850, the poor of Flushing were being put to the "Lowest bidder by the week." [Flushing Town Records 1833-1863, p. 137. (MS, no. 811, New York City Comptroller's Office.) N. C., 1876/77, c. 277, sec. 2.]

42 *Sayres vs. Inhabitants of Springfield*, 3 Halstead [8 N. J., Law Reports], 204, 207. Hendrick B. Wright (*op. cit.*, p. 264) stated that the Union Township case "put a final stop" to the practice. For allusions to the case, by Judge Burnside, the attorney in this case, see *Overseers of Milton vs. Overseers of Williamsport* (1848), 9 Pa., State Reports, 46, 48-49. Purdon's *Digest of the Laws of Pennsylvania* by Frederick C. Brightly; [8th ed., (Philadelphia, 1853), p. 659, fn.Q)] citing the last case, observed that vendue was an "indictable offence." Dix, *Memorial . . . to the Legislature of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1845), p. 5.

43 Hazard *passim*. James Montgomery Bailey, *History of Danbury, Conn.* (New York, 1896), p. 455. Danville, N. H., Town Records, III, March 1860. John S. Barry referred to the vendue system as "quite common [in Massachusetts] twenty-five years ago." [*Historical Sketch of the Town of Hanover, Mass.* (Boston, 1853), p. 168] Clay County, N. C., was still venduing its poor in 1869. [North Carolina Board of Public Charities, *First Annual Report* . . . 1870 (Raleigh, 1870), p. 42].