

= Vernon C. Bain Correctional Center =

The Vernon C. Bain Center (VCBC) , also known as the Vernon C. Bain Maritime Facility , is an 800 @-@ bed jail barge used to hold inmates for the New York City Department of Corrections . It was built in New Orleans along the Mississippi River for \$ 161 million in Avondale Shipyard , and brought to New York in 1992 to reduce overcrowding in the island 's land @-@ bound buildings for a lower price . Nicknamed " The Boat " by prison staff and inmates , it is designed to handle inmates from medium- to maximum @-@ security in 16 dormitories and 100 cells .

Currently the only barge in use , the Vernon C. Bain Center is the third prison barge that the New York Department of Corrections has used . In its history , the prison has served traditional inmates , juvenile inmates and is currently used as a holding and temporary processing center . The added security of the prison being on water has prevented at least four attempted escapes . The barge is named in memorial for warden Vernon C. Bain who died in an automobile accident . In 2014 , the prison barge was named the world 's largest prison barge in operation by the Guinness World Records .

= = History = =

In the late 1980s , the New York City Department of Correction experienced overcrowding issues in its prison complexes . The idea of temporarily alleviating the issues of a growing inmate population and dwindling space by outfitting prison ships was conceived under the administration of then Mayor Edward I. Koch . Their solution was to develop usable prison space with maritime cells and avoid complaints about building jails in densely populated neighborhoods .

In 1988 , the Bibby Resolution , and her sister ship Bibby Venture , were bought by the New York City Department of Correction in to serve as the first two prison ships . Both ships were previously used as British troop carriers before being re @-@ purposed into prison ships . In 1994 both ships were sold , leaving the Bain Correctional Center and two converted Staten Island ferries , the Wildstein and Kean , docked at Rikers Island to be used when overcrowding became an issue .

The construction of the Vernon C. Bain Center prison barge began in 1989 at Avondale Shipyard by Avondale Industries and was supposed to be finished in 1990 at the price of \$ 125 @.@ 6 million . Due to unanticipated construction problems including issues with the ventilation system , the finished barge was delivered 18 months late and \$ 35 million over budget . On January 26 , 1992 , the recently outfitted barge prison was brought through the Long Island Sound by the tugboat , Michael Turecamo , after an 1800 nautical mile trip . The new barge was named for well @-@ liked and respected warden Vernon C. Bain , who had died in an automobile accident .

One of the first captains of the barge under the Department of Corrections had previously been employed by the same tugboat company and had earlier captained the tugboat that hauled the barge to its current location . The new crew of the prison barge , who were placed in accordance with Coast Guard regulations , worked on the empty barge to learn the vessel operations , including the electrical and fire fighting systems . The barge officially opened for use and began accepting inmates later in 1992 .

From the time the barge was constructed , there has been controversy about its cost . The final price was more than \$ 35 million over budget , which attracted negative attention . The assistant correction commissioner , John H. Shanahan , claimed the price difference was because the Department of Corrections " never designed this kind of passenger vessel before and unfortunately there was a mistake in the original contract . " William Booth , the chairmain of the Board of Corrections , said at the time that the prison barge would be the last barge the Department of Corrections would build because the process was too expensive and too uncertain . The Board of Corrections is an independent body that monitors city @-@ owned prisons .

The prison barge was temporarily closed in August 1995 due to less crowded city jails , caused by a decline in arrests and inmate transfers . In late 1996 , the prison was slated for reopening due to the rise in arrests from a campaign targeting drugs and drug dealers . The six @-@ month campaign expected more than seven thousand additional arrests than usual , but the ship was not reopened

until 1998 when it was used by the Department of Juvenile Justice . The Bain Center is currently used as a processing facility for inmates in the Department of Corrections system . There are three other processing facilities that each handle specific boroughs .

= = = Juvenile detention = = =

A surge in the need for juvenile detention space caused the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice to lease space at the Bain Correction Center in 1998 . At the time , there were over five thousand juveniles aged thirteen to eighteen years old in secure detention in New York . The barge had been unused since August 1995 but had been maintained and was ready to house inmates again . The center was used to solve the space problem and to assist in the closure of Spofford Juvenile Center . The temporary space was used for juvenile inmate processing and temporary housing for inmates from prior to transfer . Children were moved out of the Bain Center and back into the Spofford facility in 1999 . In January 2000 , the Department of Juvenile Justice , after completing renovations to other buildings , moved out of the center .

= = = Escapes = = =

The first time a prisoner tried to escape from the Bain was in 1993 , when a 38 @-@ year @-@ old prisoner was able to escape while he was supposed to be cleaning ice from the parking lot in front of the ship . The guard who was responsible for the inmate was suspended without pay due to the incident .

Prior to 2002 , an inmate tried to escape from the prison 's recreation area by climbing the 30 @-@ foot fence equipped with razor wire . The guards ' uniform boots prevented them from climbing the fence in pursuit , so they threw basketballs at the inmate to stop his escape , but he was able to successfully climb over it . He dove into the East River , where he was promptly picked up and returned by a police watercraft that was dispatched to the scene .

Another escape occurred in February 2004 when the girlfriend of an inmate gave him a handcuff key . The inmate was handcuffed by one wrist to another inmate , but he was able to , without any prison employee noticing , remove the cuffs and free himself . The inmate was able to cling to the undercarriage of a prisoner transport bus to ride away from the facility . He let go of the bus in the South Bronx and walked away , but was apprehended nearly a month later . Six officers and a captain were given administrative leave due to the incident . The corrections commissioner said the escape was caused by a combination of the inmate 's quick thinking and the officers ' sloppy work .

In early 2013 , an inmate charged with petty larceny successfully slipped out of his handcuffs as he arrived at the Bain Center .

= = Facilities = =

The 625 @-@ foot long by 125 @-@ foot wide flatbed barge is equipped with 14 dormitories and 100 cells for inmates . For recreation , there is a full @-@ size gym with basketball court , weight lifting rooms and an outdoor recreation facility on the roof . There are three worship chapels , a modern medical facility and a library open to inmate use . The 47 @,@ 326 @-@ ton facility was on the water , so when it opened , a minimum of three maritime crew was maintained under Coast Guard regulations . According to John Klumpp , the barge 's first captain , in 2002 , " the Coast Guard , after years of monitoring the prison barge , finally accepted the reality that that it was , de facto , a jail and not a boat . " The prison barge is located approximately 5 miles away from SUNY Maritime college .