



# SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## THE FIRSTS

Just fourteen months after approval was granted for a Dakota Territorial Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, the facility was ready to open. The first inmates arrived on December 13, 1882, from Detroit, MI.



**Charles M. Koehler**

Accompanying the first group of 29 was a corrections officer named Charles M. Koehler.

Koehler would become the first Warden, establishing work programs, including inmates working at a rock quarry, and building inside the walls.

In 1884, the inmates built the first shop building north of the cell hall, a stable, hospital, the first wooden wall, and the 56 cells of Federal Hall. He also started the first prison library by purchasing books through charging fees to visitors.

Charles W. Hunt is credited with being the first inmate, being listed first in the Territorial Penitentiary ledger. He was sentenced to twelve years for manslaughter in Lawrence County. Of those original 29 inmates, Hunt, who was originally from Massachusetts, spent the longest time incarcerated at the Dakota Territorial Penitentiary. He was discharged on April 26, 1887, less than five years after arriving. All of the other original inmates had been discharged by 1886.

The first female prisoner arrived on May 16, 1885. Elizabeth Dill, age 33, had been convicted of murder in Richland County, which is in present day North Dakota, and was sentenced to life.

Dill was inmate #206. Her stay didn't last long. She was transferred to the North Dakota Penitentiary in Bismarck once it was completed in May 1890.

Female inmates were housed in five cells that were built on the top floor of the Penitentiary hospital, above the current day Captain's Row.



**Elizabeth Dill**