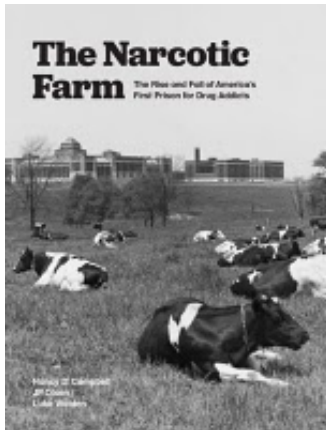


Addiction science and the Narcotic Farm

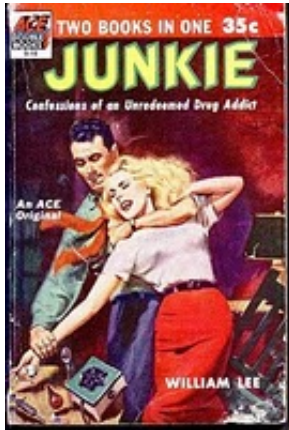
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By



At *Scientific American's* website there is a [nice short article](#) and [slide-show](#) profiling a new [documentary](#) and accompanying [book](#) about Lexington, Kentucky's Narcotic Farm—a federal prison and treatment center to which most people arrested for drugs were apparently sent between 1935 and 1975. The documentary, [The Narcotic Farm](#), will be shown on public television stations in the US in November, and the [book](#) is already available. The Narcotic Farm played a particularly important role in the history of drugs and their management in the US because, in addition to treating and punishing addicts, it was the site for some of the key experiments and research studies in addiction science.

Given this, it is especially appropriate that the text for the new book is co-written by [Nancy Campbell](#), a science and technology studies scholar at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, who has carried out extensive research on the history of drug addiction science in the US. I highly recommend her [Discovering Addiction: The Science and Politics of Substance Abuse Research](#) to anyone interested in understanding how our contemporary biomedical ideas about addiction came to be. I should add that Campbell co-wrote the book with JP Olsen and Luke Walden, both of whom also produced and directed the documentary.



Perhaps the most well known account of the Narcotics Farm comes from William Burroughs's novel [Junky](#). Here's a short excerpt:

About fifteen minutes later the attendant called, "Shot line!" Everyone in the ward lined up. As our names were called, we put an arm through a window in the door of the ward dispensary, and the attendant gave the shots. Sick as I was, the shot fixed me. Right away, I began to get hungry.

I walked up to the middle of the ward, where there were benches, chairs and a radio, and got in conversation with a thuggish-looking young Italian. He asked me if I had much of a record. I said no.

"You ought to be up with the Do-Rights," he said. "You get a longer cure there and better rooms."

The Do-Rights were people in Lexington for the first time, who were considered to be especially good prospects for a permanent cure. Evidently, the doctors in Reception didn't think too much of my prospects. (p.51, 50th anniversary edition)

AMA citation

. Addiction science and the Narcotic Farm. *Somatosphere*. . Available at: . Accessed September 15, 2012.

APA citation

. (). *Addiction science and the Narcotic Farm*. Retrieved September 15, 2012, from Somatosphere Web site:

Chicago citation

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Harvard citation

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MLA citation

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