

REPORT
OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE
OF THE
EIGHTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
STATE OF IOWA,
APPOINTED TO VISIT THE
COLLEGE FOR THE BLIND,
LOCATED AT
VINTON.

[PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.]

DES MOINES:
F. M. MILLS, STATE PRINTER.
1880.

REPORT.

Report of the Joint Committee appointed by the Eighteenth General Assembly to visit the College for the Blind.

TO THE EIGHTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

YOUR committee appointed to visit the College for the Blind report that they have performed that duty, and submit the following report:

We found the institution in a healthy condition, under excellent discipline, and thoroughly organized for efficient labor. It has the merit of being well managed, and the instructors and teachers are alive to their work. They have been supplied with all the modern improvements adapted for the training and culture of the blind, and the disposition manifested by the pupils to excel in the various branches taught can but be noticed by those who may be even chance visitors. Cleanliness and habits of tidiness are inculcated from the entrance of a student in this institution.

The college building, as well as the work-rooms and all out-buildings, indicate how thoroughly those in charge have striven to keep them clean, orderly, and healthful; and nothing is wanting in this respect. General good health prevails among the students, and the only cases of illness in the institution during the biennial period can readily be traced to colds caused by undue exposure, which cannot be guarded against by those in charge, exercising, as they do, the closest watchfulness.

The whole number of students enrolled is eighty-six, indicating a falling off in the attendance since the last report.

By inquiry, we found that there are in this State not less than 500 blind persons, old and young. It is to be regretted that the institution is not filled to its utmost capacity. The building is of sufficient size to accommodate fully 150 students, and after a thorough examination,

we are unable to report any cause for complaint. Those in attendance are happy, contented, and when once familiar with the round of duties and studies, the advantages offered, and perhaps more on account of the attractions of the life so well calculated and arranged for them—a student rarely if ever leaves the institution of his or her own volition. The reasons why this institution is not filled to overflowing—an institution which the State has so generously provided for the education and development of this class of unfortunate persons—may be accounted for on two grounds. Either one or both may afford an explanation:

First. There is a false impression prevalent throughout the State relative to the character of this institution, viz: that it is an *asylum* for the blind, where this class of persons may seek a refuge or a home, when they or their friends cannot suitably provide for their temporal wants. While it is a fact that its doors are open to the poor as well as to the rich, and the institution is supported by the State—none are turned away because of their inability to support themselves, yet here the distinction ceases. It cannot be called an *asylum*. It is a *college for the blind*, where the State has ever in readiness a corps of competent teachers and instructors, with cheerful hearts and ready hands to lead and guide all of suitable age and mental faculties to become good scholars in the ordinary branches, sciences and music, as well as to fit them for some avocation in life, whereby they may be enabled to earn their own livelihood. By inquiry, your committee found that the larger number of those in attendance at this college come from families who, if not opulent, were well to do, or were worthy of being classed among the better classes of society.

The *second* cause which has prevented the college from being filled to overflowing lies in the improper way provided by law for informing the Superintendent of the college of the place of residence of the blind persons within the State. Sub-division 11 of section 1745 of the Code directs the district secretary of each township to notify the Superintendent of the county in which he resides the name, age, and place of residence of each blind person in his district, and in turn section 1680 of the Code provides that each county superintendent in the State shall report to the Superintendent of the College for the Blind the names, ages, residence, etc., of such blind persons residing in his county. The district township secretary, in a majority of cases, forgets or neglects to perform his duty in this particular, and when he

does report as required he fails to give the name and post-office address of the parents of such blind children in his district. It will be readily seen that the Superintendent of the college has not the means of communicating with the parents of such blind children, simply because the sections of the Code above referred to do not make it the duty of the proper officer to transmit the information. An amendment to these sections of the Code is suggested, and other means devised whereby the Superintendent of the institution can be informed of these facts, which will result in filling the institution with pupils to its utmost capacity. The corps of teachers and instructors is sufficient to care for all who can be accommodated therein, while it would not necessarily increase the number of employes, to exceed three or four. It may not be out of place to add here that after carefully considering the manner in which each instructor or teacher is engaged we cannot see how the number can be reduced without lessening the usefulness of the institution, though the same teachers now employed could easily instruct nearly double the number of pupils.

To the end that the Superintendent of that institution may be advised fully as to the name and age of each blind person in the State, as well as the name and post-office address of the parents of blind children, it would seem that this information can be obtained at slight expense to the State during the present year at the time of taking the census. As the institution is maintained at great expense to the State, and while the students now in attendance are making rapid progress in ordinary branches as well as music, yet a larger number are without the institution, and might derive the same benefit without any great additional expense.

Then, too, there are quite a large number of young men and young women in the State who, on account of blindness, can really do nothing by way of self-support, and are too old to commence a course of study, and may feel a delicacy on account of their age about attempting to gain an education. The principal of the college suggests that such young men and young women, possessed of good morals, and not over twenty years of age, might, in small numbers, find it greatly to their advantage to avail themselves of the opportunity of learning a trade in the industrial departments of the institution. Such young men could be taught to make brooms, weave baskets, make mattresses, etc., while the young women can be taught to sew, knit, etc., in the clothing department. It seems in keeping with the record we have

established in the past, to lend a helping hand to such unfortunates as may feel inclined to accept the opportunities offered, and encourage them to habits of usefulness. Your committee, therefore, recommend that the Trustees of the institution be authorized to receive such as may present themselves, when they become satisfied that the applicants come under the rule above indicated.

In accordance with the concurrent resolution passed by the Eighteenth General Assembly, your committee made the investigation required of them, and herewith append their report, as follows:

1st. They find that the appropriations made by the Seventeenth General Assembly have been wisely and economically expended.

2d. They find that the appropriations made by the last General Assembly were expended only for the objects appropriated, so far as the money was expended

For bedsteads, chairs, etc., there was appropriated.....	\$ 1000 00
And there has been expended	612 22

Balance remaining unexpended, which will be hereafter needed.	\$ 387 78
---	-----------

Of the amount appropriated for sewer.....	\$ 800 00
There was expended the sum of	645 26

Leaving still in the Treasurer's hands the sum of.....	\$ 154 74
--	-----------

The amount appropriated for repairing fence, \$400, still remains in the State Treasury, no warrant having been drawn for the same.

For contingent expenses there was appropriated the sum of	\$ 400 00
Of which there has been expended.....	392 85

Leaving a balance of	\$ 7 15
----------------------------	---------

Showing a balance of the appropriations made by the Seventeenth

General Assembly of.....	\$ 949 67
--------------------------	-----------

As the institution will need the balance appropriated for the purpose of purchasing bedsteads, bedding and chairs, there should be deducted from the amount above stated, the sum of \$387.78, which will leave still unexpended \$561.89, which will not be required for the purposes appropriated.

3d. We find that chapter 67 of the Acts of the Seventeenth General Assembly, has been complied with, in not contracting indebtedness in excess of the appropriations.

4th. We find there has been no diversion of any money from the specific purpose for which it was drawn out of the State Treasury.

5th. Your committee found that the same persons are in the employ of this institution, and for the same purposes and at the same salary as set forth in the fourteenth biennial report of this institution, and that said persons receive no other or further compensation than is therein stated. All of said persons board in the institution, unless otherwise stated.

As the above report is in print, we make reference to page twenty-seven for the balance of our answer.

The college has been well managed, and the expenditures have not been excessive for a State institution, yet the amount of money in the hands of the Treasurer of the institution indicates that there has been more money appropriated for different purposes than has been needed. The following is the surplus, including funds not drawn from State Treasury:

Balance of special library appropriation, Sixteenth General Assembly.....	\$ 1 52
Balance of special appropriation for music, Sixteenth General Assembly.....	2 59
Balance of special appropriation for bedsteads, etc., Seventeenth General Assembly.....	387 78
Balance of special appropriation to repair fences (not drawn), Seventeenth General Assembly.....	400 00
Balance of special appropriation for contingent expenses, Seventeenth General Assembly.....	7 15
Balance of special appropriation for sewer, Seventeenth General Assembly.....	154 74
Balance of general fund, in hands of Treasurer.....	5472 66
Making a grand total of	\$ 6426 44

The appropriations asked for the coming biennial period are stated in the Trustees' fourteenth biennial report, and are as follows:

Removing old ceiling of main building and replacing same with new.....	\$ 600 00
Repairing boilers.....	1000 00
New iron fences	4000 00
For cattle barn and hog house.....	1000 00
Total	\$ 6600 00

Having in view the needs of the State at the present time, and the absolute necessity of refraining from making any appropriations which are not absolutely required, we cannot recommend the building of the

iron fence which the State is asked by the institution to make provision for by way of an appropriation. The present fence, though not ornamental, can be made to protect the grounds at an expense comparatively small to the amount asked. There is really great danger in allowing the plastering on the ceiling of the main building to remain longer as it is thick, and the ceilings high; in many places the plastering is cleaving off and liable to fall on the heads of the occupants of that part of the building. An appropriation should be made to meet the expense of removing and replacing the plastering on so much of the ceiling of the main building as may be found to be loose or liable to fall, and \$600 is therefore suggested as being sufficient to meet the expense.

The present barn used for cattle and hogs is unworthy of the name. It is too small and too crowded to answer the purpose desired. A portion of the material contained in it can doubtless be utilized in the construction of a new barn, or of the hog house, and \$800 will doubtless be sufficient to build a sufficiently large cattle barn and hog house with the material that can be saved from the old building to meet the wants of the State, in this particular, for many years.

There are three boilers used for heating purposes, two of which have been in use nine years, and the third not as long. All these have been patched and are not safe. They might be used a year or more longer, but there is great danger of their giving out or leaking badly, at any time. The pump connected with the engine is also badly worn, and works imperfectly; this needs a small outlay to place it in good repair. \$1,000 is considered to be a sufficient sum to repair the boilers and the pump, and we therefore recommend that that amount be appropriated to include repairs on boilers and the pump.

There is also really needed a small amount to be used for contingent expenses, which was not stated in the estimate of the Trustees. In view of the fact that \$400 was appropriated by the 17th General Assembly to be used in repairing fence, your committee consider that sum too large to be needed for that purpose at the present time and suggest the propriety of transferring that appropriation to the contingent fund, with a provision that such a portion may be used for repairing the fences as may be required, and the balance to be used for contingent purposes. There is also a small amount needed occasionally for music and musical instruments, and we suggest the propriety of transferring for that purpose the balance of the sewer fund appropria-

ted by the last General Assembly which, it will be remembered, amounts to \$154.74.

We see no reason for increasing the pupilage appropriation which was reduced by the 17th General Assembly to thirty-six dollars per quarter for each pupil. The fact that the general fund is constantly increasing is the very best argument that can be used that the reduction of the same by the General Assembly two years ago was wise.

As previously stated, there is at the present time a balance in the hands of the treasurer of the institution belonging to what is known as the general fund, the sum of \$5,472.66, which is constantly increasing. While the management is worthy of being congratulated for so wisely husbanding the funds, there seems to be no reason for keeping so large an amount of money on hand, and your committee suggest that this sum be placed to the credit of the ordinary expense fund and the whole amount expended before any more money is drawn from the treasury as is contemplated in section 1675 of the Code.

The physician in attendance at the institution expresses the belief that quite a number of the students in attendance at the college might if properly treated be permanently cured of blindness, and it is thought by the trustees and principal desirable to employ an oculist and prepare a room in the building for treatment of those most likely to be benefited. It is thought that \$1,500 would be ample for that purpose, which would include all expenses connected with the proposed trial of skill. The committee sent to visit this institution by the 17th General Assembly made a similar report, but no action on the subject was taken by that body, and it now remains for the 18th General Assembly to decide how they will treat it.

To recapitulate, your committee have found that the following appropriations and transfer of funds are desirable and therefore recommend them:

For repairing boilers and pump	\$ 1000 00
For removing and replacing plastering of ceiling in main building	600 00
For building barn and hog-house	800 00
The transfer of the appropriation made by 17th General Assembly for repairing fence to contingent fund	400 00
The transfer of balance of sewer fund to fund for purchasing music and musical instruments	154 74

A. H. LAWRENCE,
On behalf of the Senate.

D. W. STUTSMAN,
E. J. DEAN,
On behalf of the House.