

REPORT

OF THE

JOINT COMMITTEE

OF THE

FOURTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

APPOINTED TO VISIT THE

INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND, AT VINTON, IOWA.

DES MOINES:

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1872.

REPORT.

To the General Assembly of the State of Iowa :

Your committee, appointed in compliance with a joint resolution of the Fourteenth General Assembly to visit the Institution for the Blind, at Vinton, Iowa, and examine its condition, needs, and wants, have performed that duty during the recess of the General Assembly, and now beg leave to submit the following report :

A brief examination and comparison of the books of account and the itemized vouchers corresponding thereto taken in duplicate in accordance with the law, satisfied us that they were correct and the finances and expenditures of the Institution carefully guarded. As to the wants of the Institution, the one which presented itself first and most forcibly to our attention was the

LACK OF ROOM.

The Institution is now full and in almost every direction many devices have to be used to provide room for those attending, whilst there are, we are informed, no less than eighty blind persons in the State, outside the Institution, who are suffering for want of the education, training, and nurture demanded by their unfortunate condition.

Thus about forty females are assigned to one sitting-room 18 x 26 feet, which has to be used for recitations in the forenoon, and sewing-class in the afternoon.

The Trustees who have the care of the Institution make the following additional statements in their report to the General Assembly, which we quote :

“The gentlemen’s sitting-room is occupied in the forenoon with

recitations, and in the afternoon with music, being the only place for instruction upon the violin. The large number of persons practising upon the violin are sent (for such practice) to the broom shop and the rooms of employees. Two additional rooms for piano are needed—one piano is now in the organ room and one in a recitation room.

“The public parlor has been taken for a nursery. The dining-hall is filled beyond comfort. There is no apartment for the female industries and no room for exercise in inclement weather.

“If such are the present necessities, what must be the condition in a few years if relief be not afforded? The increase of the number of blind from ordinary causes, and from immigration, is much more rapid in a new State than in the older States, and there is a necessity for more comprehensive plans in regard to Eleemosynary Institutions.”

The present building can contain about one hundred pupils only with comfort, and there are already in actual attendance over that number. Numbers of the blind who have already applied for admission to the institution have been refused for want of room.

If this school shall afford instruction to *all* the blind of the State who desire its aid in their present night of darkness, it will be necessary to add to the buildings, or else by over-crowding the present building, cause discomfort, induce disease, and impair the efficiency of the school.

We, therefore, after a careful examination of the facts, suggest and earnestly recommend to your consideration the propriety, and we might say the necessity, of such legislation at this session as will enlarge the building and increase the capacity and usefulness of the school.

A wing can be added to the north end of the main edifice, so as to be convenient and symmetrical, increasing the capacity of the institution more than fifty per cent, at a cost of about \$70,000.

This addition is urged by the superintendent and board of trustees in their report and is fit and proper to be made, provided the finances of the State will permit.

We carefully examined the building and found the same in good order, the rooms properly ventilated, and the sanitary regulations

excellent. There are three departments of instruction, music, literature, and industry, each absolutely necessary for the comfort, knowledge, and support in after life of the pupils. Each and all are ably managed by experienced professors and teachers, as to a full exhibit of the course of instruction, the names of pupils, and the finances of the institution, we ask your attention to the able and exhaustive report made to the present General Assembly as required by law.

We would further recommend that the course of instruction in the institution, and the continuance of pupils therein, at least in the educational department, be limited to six years to those over fourteen years of age at admission, and to others to eight years. By so doing the institution will be looked upon by those attending, as a school of course, and a period of graduation before them. In special cases however, and for special reasons, the board of trustees might permit of larger attendance. We think the best good of those in attendance and of the State, and the urgent need of those who are seeking admission and cannot obtain it, yet who stand much in need of the instruction and training therein imparted, demand such a course.

And we deem it best that the Legislature should take action on this matter, if it need your approval, rather than leave the delicate and unpleasant duty to others—the superintendent or the board of trustees. Those who have visited the institution can fully realize what a blessing it is to those who have been afflicted by loss of sight to enjoy its instruction and privileges.

The moral and religious tone of the institution is excellent, the discipline and order good.

The situation is pleasant and healthful. The institution cheerful and neat in its apartments, economical in expenditure, well heated, ventilated and lighted, withal well and truly an institution for the education of the blind.

All of which is most respectfully submitted.

JOHN McKEAN,

On the part of the Senate.

C. CLOSE,

JOHN P. IRISH,

On the part of the House.