

REPORT  
OF THE  
JOINT COMMITTEE

TO THE  
FOURTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

APPOINTED TO VISIT THE  
STATE PENITENTIARY, AT FORT MADISON.

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DES MOINES:  
G. W. EDWARDS, STATE PRINTER.  
1872.

## REPORT.

*To the General Assembly:*

The Joint Committee appointed to visit the State Penitentiary, have performed that duty and beg leave to report the result of their examination. In the performance of the duty assigned them they spent more than the usual time occupied by such committees, and diligently enquired into the condition, workings, management, and wants of that institution.

### CONDITION OF THE PREMISES.

We carefully inspected the premises occupied by the convicts and found their cells cleanly, their hospital appointments excellent, and their work-shops in good order.

### CONDITION OF THE PRISONERS.

The prisoners appeared well fed, on plain wholesome well-cooked food. Everything suited for their well-being, under the circumstances appeared to be properly attended to by all having charge over them. We observed them at work in the shops, eating their meals, locked in their cells, attending worship in the chapel on Sunday, and sitting in classes in Sunday-school. Their health appeared good, very little serious illness existing among them. There was in the hospital one case of pneumonia, and three other cases of less serious disease, which is a small proportion of invalids to the whole number of convicts (284) in the prison.

### DISCIPLINE.

The discipline maintained over the prisoners, so far as we could see, is strict and yet kind; and their conduct all that could be expected.

### MANAGEMENT OF THE FINANCES.

We enquired into the financial affairs of the prison, and we are satisfied that Mr. Heisey the warden, has been a prudent, capable, and faithful officer, who deserves the thanks of the people. We

on the hill above the prison to supply the wants of the institution and for the use of the contractors. An abundant supply of water was thus furnished; and yet on solicitation the Thirteenth General Assembly appropriated four hundred dollars (\$400.00) toward sinking an artesian well, under the following proviso, "*Provided*, the contractors for the prison labor shall spend an equal amount for the completion of said well, should it be found necessary." The State accordingly spent the \$400.00, but the contractors have refused to spend "an equal amount," or any amount whatever, alleging that the machinery would give out, if any farther attempts were made at sinking said well, and so it remains unfinished. It should never have been begun.

#### CLAIM FOR SHOPS.

Two additional shops have been built by the contractors, one used as a polishing shop, the other as a foundry. It is but fair that the State should pay the actual amount of money expended in their construction. We are of the opinion that \$800.00 would remunerate the contract for the polishing shop, and \$900.00 for the foundry.

#### GENERAL REPAIRS.

We recommend that the sum of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) or so much thereof as is necessary, be made subject to the disposal of the Census Board for the purpose of making repairs that may be necessary during the next two years.

#### OFFICERS' SALARIES.

The clerk's salary is seven hundred and fifty dollars (\$750.00) a year. The surgeon receives six hundred dollars (\$600.00). The chaplain six hundred dollars (\$600.00). Taking into consideration the qualifications and duties of the clerk, his salary should be one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00). The physician and surgeon should receive one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00), the chaplain at least eight hundred dollars (\$800.00), and the deputy warden twelve hundred dollars (\$1,200.00).

It has been suggested to us that the compensation of the clerk and other under officers and guards, might be increased by allowing them to purchase their supplies of provisions, &c., from the prison

stores, at wholesale or original cost rates, and not increase their money pay. We refer this matter to you, without recommendation.

#### THE WARDEN'S HOUSE.

We recommend an appropriation of five hundred dollars (500.00), toward furnishing the warden's house.

#### TRANSPORTATION FOR DISCHARGED CONVICTS.

The State now allows from three to five dollars to each convict discharged from prison. This sum is entirely insufficient to carry him to any considerable distance, and we are of the opinion, that the interests of the public would be promoted by furnishing transportation to the discharged prisoners, to any point within the State, where his home may have been, if he desires to return there. This is provided for, by law, in some other States, and we earnestly recommend such a provision in our laws.

#### FINANCIAL INSPECTORS.

The Iowa Penitentiary has grown to be an institution of such magnitude, that the office of warden is one of great importance and heavy responsibility. Large sums of money must necessarily be expended. Those hundreds of fellow beings suffering the penalties of violated law, may need occasional attention from others than those placed as guards and task-masters over them. Most of these things the Governor can look after, as now provided by law. But there should be some more special and particular provision made for inspecting the financial affairs of the institution. We call attention of the General Assembly to this matter.

#### CAPACITY OF THE PRISON.

Extensive and well appointed as is the prison, it is already almost filled to its capacity, and steps must immediately be taken to either enlarge the establishment at Fort Madison, or commence the erection of a new prison at some other point in the State.

#### ENLARGEMENT OF THE PRESENT PRISON.

To fully understand the difficulties that attend any farther enlargement of the present prison grounds, it is necessary to inspect it in person, the badly chosen and unfortunate site upon which the

grounds are located. The site of the prison enclosure consists of a plateau dug out of the nose, or descending ridge of a high bluff, having a deep ravine and a running stream on both sides. There is a strip of ravine land 253 feet wide on the west side of the prison wall, belonging to the State. This is the only practical direction in which an extension can be made. To do this, however, the east half or side of a deep hollow must be filled up requiring an immense wall of solid masonry to hold up the embankment. To fill up behind this wall would require about eighty-two thousand (82,000) cubic yards of earth to raise the ground to the level of the present prison yard. To do all this to obtain a strip of ground only two hundred and fifty-three (253) feet wide, by three hundred and fifty (350) feet long, is simply absurd.

We measured and calculated this strip of ravine by the best means at our command, and we arrived at the conclusion that to make it a part of the prison enclosure, build the west wall, etc., and fit it for the uses of the prison, would require an expenditure of about one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000), and by the time this is done we will be ready to commence another prison on a better site. We therefore advise no farther expenditure for extending the present prison grounds.

#### A NEW PRISON.

We believe that the best interests of the State, in this matter, require that steps be taken during the present session, for the erection of a new prison at some point in the State where there are extensive quarries of good rock. Let such a site be chosen, and the surplus convicts at Fort Madison can be employed in constructing the new buildings. Let the Penitentiary be located on such a site, and the State need never be at the mercy of contractors for the prison labor. The establishment thus situated will be not only less expensive to the State, but may be made entirely self-supporting. We most earnestly recommend this subject to the attention of the General Assembly.

SAMUEL McNUTT,  
*On the part of the Senate.*

OLIVER MILLS,  
JOHN MORRISON,  
*On the part of the House.*

## SECOND BIENNIAL REPORT

OF THE

TRUSTEES AND SUPERINTENDENT

OF THE

# IOWA REFORM SCHOOL

SITUATED IN LEE COUNTY,

TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE.

LIST OF OFFICERS AND ESTIMATE OF VALUE OF PROPERTY.

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NOVEMBER, 1871.  
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