

REPORT
OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE

OF THE
TWENTY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE
STATE OF IOWA,

APPOINTED TO VISIT THE
BENEDICT HOME

LOCATED AT
DES MOINES.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

DES MOINES:
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REPORT.

To the Twenty-third General Assembly of the State of Iowa:

Your Committee to visit the Benedict Home and report as to the expenditure of the appropriation therefor, made by the Twenty-second General Assembly, would respectfully report that they have visited the same and are satisfied that the four thousand dollars appropriated by the Twenty-second General Assembly has been wisely and economically expended in accordance with the provision of the act, and under the supervision of the executive council.

We find that in addition to the amount appropriated by the Twenty-second General Assembly, the trustees of the institution have received and expended a legacy from the late Christian Winkler, amounting to two thousand and fifty-six dollars and ninety-four cents (\$2,056.94), and other cash donations aggregating nearly three thousand dollars, making a sum total of more than nine thousand dollars (\$9,000) for support and repairs during the period.

The buildings have been much improved during the last biennial period by painting, plastering, putting in cement floors and fire escapes, and numerous other improvements calculated to increase the comfort and convenience of the inmates.

We have examined the books of the institution and find that it is conducted on business principles. A complete account is kept of all funds expended, and vouchers for same are on file. A record of all persons admitted and discharged is kept, together with a record of births and deaths.

We find that owing to want of funds, the Board of Trustees have been obliged to limit the number admitted to an average of twenty-five, although the Home could easily accommodate as many more were the means of support supplied.

The want of a suitable building apart from the main dwelling, compels the Board of Trustees to refuse admittance to many persons worthy of their charity who, at the time of applying, are afflicted

with a contagious disease. Your Committee would respectfully recommend that an appropriation of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) be made for the erection of a suitable building for this purpose.

Owing to the lowering of the street to the established grade, by the city authorities, on the north side of the grounds, the barn belonging to the Home is likely to be precipitated into the street. Your Committee would recommend that a sum sufficient for the purpose be appropriated to enable the Board to put a substantial foundation under said barn.

We understand that the institution has not contracted any indebtedness, but that it has been embarrassed from the beginning for want of funds, and in consequence the Board of Managers have been obliged to refuse admittance to many worthy applicants, receiving only the most urgent cases. They have been obliged to refuse all applications for the past two years, except to fill the places of girls leaving the Home.

The immediate supervision of the Home is under the care of the Matron, Mrs. H. E. Rainheld, who receives thirty dollars per month for her services. The Medical department of the Home is under the supervision of Miss Rose Butt, who is resident physician, and receives for her services the sum of fifteen dollars per month. The doctor, however, is permitted to practice outside of the Home. In addition to this the Home has a consulting medical board, composed of six prominent physicians, three ladies and three gentlemen, being in Des Moines, who are called in cases of severe sickness, services of said Board being gratuitous.

Girls entering the Home are required to obligate themselves for a period of two years unless allowed to go sooner by the Board of Managers.

The total number of women in the Home during the last biennial period was sixty-six (66), the average being twenty-five (25). The total capacity for the Home is about fifty (50).

The total number of children in the Home during the same period was sixty-two (62); of that number thirteen (13) have died, three (3) were still-born; sixteen have been adopted in good families; twelve have gone out with their mothers and eighteen remain.

The Board of Trustees of the Home do not insist on retaining the inmates for the full term of two years if good situations are offered. In fact, the pressure for admittance is so great, and the means of support so inadequate, that the Board are often compelled to allow the inmates to leave before the work of reformation

is complete in order to make room for others more worthy of their attention.

Efforts are made to keep trace of girls leaving the Home, which show that about three fourths of them give evidence of reformation. None are received a second time.

There has been an effort to make the Home, in part, self-supporting, but with the necessary care of the infants and the large amount of sickness, any remunerative industry which would supply the Home with funds is impossible. A small amount has been earned each year by laundry work and cultivating the grounds belonging to the Home. But aside from the vegetables and fruit raised the efforts in that direction have not been a success.

The Home is well ventilated. Everything in and about the building is in perfect order and gives evidence of careful management.

Each person when in good health is required to take charge of her own personal effects, and everything is kept neat and clean.

There are sufficient means of escape in case of fire, and in this respect the Home has been much improved in the last two years.

Careful provision against fire has been made about the furnaces which heat the building. But owing to the breaking of the fire grate in the furnace they have been compelled for some time past to heat the building with stoves.

The Twenty-second General Assembly appropriated four thousand dollars for support and for repairing buildings, and your committee would respectfully recommend that a suitable sum be appropriated by the Twenty-third General Assembly for support and repairs, and for the erection of a suitable building to be used as a hospital, where those afflicted with contagious disease may be isolated from the remainder of the inmates of the Home.

The institution is under the management of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Iowa, and it receives inmates from all parts of the State. This society has a Benedict Home department in each local society, through which suitable homes are secured for the girls when discharged, and also through this instrumentality the Trustees are enabled to secure good homes for the children by adoption into good families.

In conclusion your committee wish to say that in their opinion the institution is doing great good for the State, not only in a charitable way, by providing shelter and care for the unfortunate,

but also in the reformatory work which saves the State a much larger expense in the prosecution and care of its criminals.

WM. G. KENT,

On the part of the Senate.

W. A. DAVIE,

B. B. LANE,

On the part of the House.