

REPORT
OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE
OF THE
TWENTY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
STATE OF IOWA,
APPOINTED TO VISIT THE
SOLDIERS' ORPHANS' HOME,
LOCATED AT
DAVENPORT.

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REPORT.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:

Your committee appointed to visit the Soldiers' Orphans' Home and Home for Indigent Children respectfully submit the following report:

The Home is a small village bounding three sides of a hollow square, with eighteen cottages and an industrial and administration building, boiler and engine-room, barns, storeroom, and ice-house, all situated in the midst of fifty-seven acres of land, adjacent to the city of Davenport, Scott county. The cottages are mostly one-story, divided into a sitting room and dormitory, in which are crowded on an average twenty-four children, with a matron, and two or three older children to assist in taking care of the younger ones.

The average number of children in this Home is nearly 500, of different ages, from 2 years old up to 14, at which mature age they are generally supplied with places in families throughout the state of Iowa; the education and training, morally, intellectually and physically, they receive at the Home being for them a commendation which is an "open sesame" to the shelter and protection of good private families until the hour of their majority comes, when they, like all other adult mortals, must bear the "burthen" of life for themselves.

About one-half this number of orphans which sojourn in this Home are the descendants of soldiers and the other half are "county children," so-called, who are sent to this Home instead of the county poor houses. It is an everlasting procession of otherwise homeless and fatherless little girls and boys marching into a hospitable house provided by the state, there to be loved, caressed, fed, clothed, taught, and supported until they can march out into places of honorable employment, and become self-supporting citizens.

There the helpless little ones find the tenderness, kindness and solicitude of a kind matron's love, and as they advance toward the years of accountability are taught in many departments of practical industry, and receive a good elementary English education, so that they are equipped to go out and begin the interesting battle of life with the same advantages as the more fortunate who have been reared in the sunlight of parental homes.

This Home turns out its tens and hundreds every year of stalwart boys and pure girls, fitted for usefulness in all the walks of life, who would otherwise be candidates for our jails, penitentiaries, and "palaces of sin," which in the end prove rather to be the vestibules of hell.

These homes arrest the onward march of tens of thousands of our children toward the goal of vice and crime and a felon's fate, and turn them into paths of honor and virtue. Any one visiting this institution and looking into the faces of this household of 500 children, taken up out of haunts of poverty, wretchedness and crime and transformed into brave young men and lovely young ladies, must involuntarily thank God for man's humanity to man and feel increased pride in the grand Hawkeye state, which was the first in all the world to extend the blessings of home and hearthstone to helpless orphans as they totter from their cradles toward otherwise numberless pitfalls and dangers.

There, in this orphans' home, is as good an illustration of the Christian's dream of the kingdom of heaven begun on earth as can be found in this world. Apparently all is peace and harmony there. No quarreling or contention, or angry words or tearful faces, unless it be tears of sympathy for the unavoidable ills to which all are everywhere exposed. "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," were the words of the great Master.

Grand and humane as all our asylums for the unfortunate are, still there is no institution which more incarnates the teachings of our holy religion than this home at Davenport, which is ever reaching out its arms all over the state of Iowa to rescue her unfortunate children from suffering, and crime, and premature death, and making them happy, honorable and useful citizens of this great commonwealth.

We cannot too highly praise the management of the trustees, some of whom stand guard and watch over these little ones

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almost every day in the week with all the interest of real parents for their own children.

The superintendents, matrons, assistants, and teachers are apparently faithful, frugal and kind. The hundreds of cheerful faces of the little ones, and the confidence with which they approach these guardians and nestle into their arms, demonstrates that it is a community where kindness and not tyranny holds uninterrupted sway. Its great utility must be apparent to all philanthropists and statesmen.

It is economy to maintain an institution whose tendency is to minimize all evil and depopulate our jails, and prisons, and asylums by turning the steps of the children of the unfortunate, from whose ranks the criminal classes have been largely recruited in the past, into the pathways that lead to honor, competency, and happiness.

WHAT THE HOME NEEDS.

We could recommend all the appropriations suggested by the trustees and superintendent, but we know that our resources are limited to furnishing necessities for all our benevolent and reformatory institutions. The greatest need of the Home to-day is more land, so the boys can be taught farming and horticulture, and the vegetables can be raised by them that are consumed at the Home.

Next, there is great need that the industrial building be extended so that other and more trades can be taught.

There should also be an appropriation extending the steam-heating appliances to the other cottages now heated with stoves. Many, if not all, the remaining one-story cottages should have the addition of another story, so that a cottage will accommodate forty children better and with better ventilation than it now accommodates twenty-four.

The ice-house is a small, tumble-down affair. It should be enlarged and all the appliances for cold storage be supplied. It is impossible to economize in the buying of supplies in quantities without the facilities of cold storage to preserve what is so bought.

The foregoing are the most important demands or crying needs of the Home. We therefore recommend the following appropriations:

For the purchase of an additional forty acres of land.....	\$8,000
For the improvement of cottages by adding another story.....	8,000
For the extension of the water and steam-heating pipes to the four cottages now without such supply.....	2,000
Ice-house and cold storage.....	2,000
Contingent fund.....	5,000
Water tank.....	500

We would gladly endorse appropriations for conservatory, and library, and other desirable purposes, but the state must economize and keep as much as possible the burthen of taxation from the people and the many private homes which are no more provided with accommodations than our public Home will be if the above appropriations are made.

All of which is respectfully submitted by your committee.

L. A. ELLIS,

For the Senate.

M. McDONALD,

For the House.