

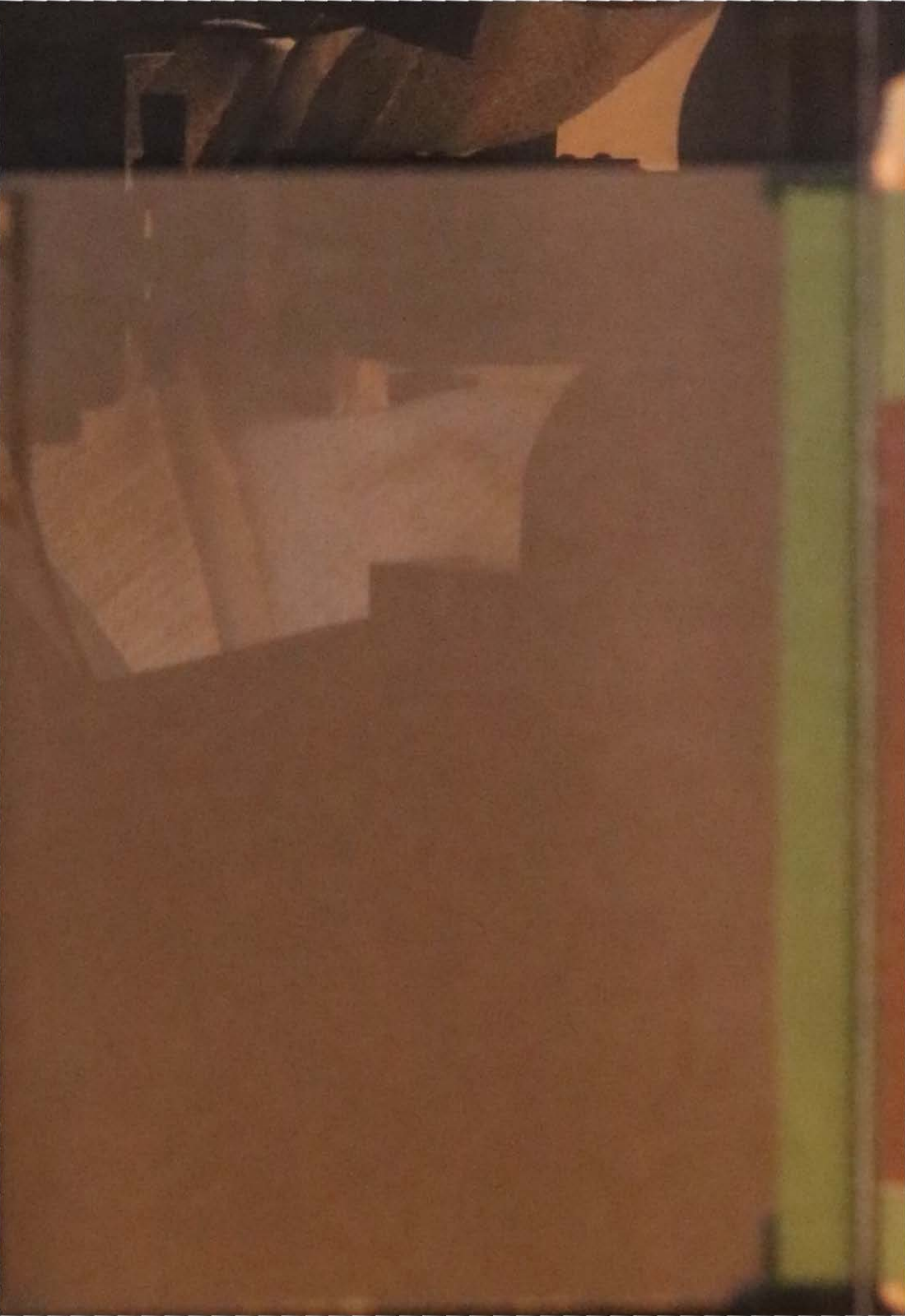
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REPORT
OF
COMMISSIONERS

IN RELATION TO AN

Industrial Home for Adult Blind

FOR THE

STATE OF IOWA.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

DES MOINES:
G. H. RAGSDALE, STATE PRINTER.
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REPORT.

DES MOINES, IOWA, September 2, 1889.

To his Excellency, WILLIAM LARRABEE, Governor of Iowa:

In presenting our report in relation to the employment of adult blind, within the State of Iowa, the Commission begs to refer briefly to the condition of blind within our State, and the causes which led to the enactment of the law, under and by virtue of which the Commission was appointed to investigate this subject.

From the most reliable sources of information attainable to us, we estimate the number of blind persons within the commonwealth of Iowa, between fifteen and eighteen hundred. Of this number, more than thirteen hundred are above school age, and very many of them have passed that age in life when they might have learned more easily than now some useful trade, such as blind persons learn in their earlier years of life. There are likewise many who have been educated at "The College for the Blind," at Vinton, Iowa, and have gone out into the world to fight the battle of life, and at great disadvantage compete with their more fortunate fellow beings, who have the full use of all their faculties.

A very large per cent of those who have been educated at the College, and have enjoyed its many advantages, are unable to successfully compete with sighted persons, aided as they are by the improved machinery of this age, which cannot be used by blind persons.

The result of this unequal contest is shown in the fact that many of these unfortunate persons, who are unaided, are unable to sustain themselves, and therefore become objects of public charity, in many instances finding their way to alms-houses, where they are kept without employment, a burden to the community and more than a burden to themselves. The Commission has had correspondence with the chairmen of the boards of supervisors of the State, and reports have been received from thirty-seven of the least populated

counties, showing twelve blind persons who are inmates of poor-houses. This is but a small per cent of the number of those who are either sustained in the poor-houses of the State or by aid from the State in other ways.

This condition of helplessness, want, and wretchedness among these people led many of the more fortunate blind to inquire what, if anything, could be done to enable their less favored ones to wholly, or in part, provide the means of sustenance. None were more active in determining this question than the blind.

ORIGIN OF THE PRESENT MOVEMENT.

At a reunion of those who had been educated at "The College for the Blind," held at Vinton, Iowa, in June, 1886, the question was thoroughly discussed, and, following in the line of thought advanced by leading educators of the blind throughout the civilized world, it was resolved that a "Working Home for the Blind, where suitable handicraft can be pursued by them, would serve best to aid them, and relieve the public of the burdens of their maintenance."

It was also resolved to submit the matter to the General Assembly of the State, and ask its aid in establishing such a "Working Home," where the blind may do such work as blind persons can do, and so far as may be done, sustain themselves.

A committee of blind persons was appointed to present the subject-matter to the General Assembly, which was afterward done. This met with a ready response from a people noted for their generous benevolences. The Twenty-second General Assembly took up the question and passed the following

ACT:

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa:

SECTION 1. That the Governor of the State is hereby authorized and empowered to appoint a Commission of three persons (one of whom shall be a woman) for the purposes and the duties hereinafter provided.

SEC. 2. Said Commissioners shall be citizens of the State of Iowa who have given attention to the instruction and employment of blind people in useful and industrial [industrial] arts. Said Commissioners shall receive as compensation for their services the sum of three dollars for each day actually employed and their necessary traveling expenses, to be paid by the State Treasurer upon warrants to issue by the State Auditor on the order of the Executive Council, and the itemized statement of each Commissioner shall be duly verified and filed with said Council, and by said Council audited and approved before said order shall be given.

The first of these is the "Federalist Papers" by James Madison, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton. These essays were published in 1787-88 to persuade the public to ratify the new Constitution. They argued for a strong central government and the separation of powers.

The second is the "Anti-Federalist Papers," which were published in 1787-88 as a response to the Federalist Papers. These essays argued against the ratification of the Constitution, fearing that it would create a tyrannical government.

The third is the "Declaration of Independence," which was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. It declared the thirteen American colonies to be free and independent states, no longer under British rule.

The fourth is the "Bill of Rights," which was added to the Constitution in 1791. It consists of the first ten amendments to the Constitution, which guarantee certain individual liberties, such as freedom of speech and religion.

The fifth is the "Emancipation Proclamation," which was issued by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It declared that all slaves in the Confederate States of America were to be freed.

The sixth is the "Civil Rights Act of 1875," which was passed by Congress in 1875. It prohibited racial discrimination in public accommodations, such as hotels and restaurants. This act was later declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1883.

A BREVISED HISTORY

The "Federalist Papers" are a collection of essays written by James Madison, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton in 1787-88. They were published in the New York press and were intended to persuade the public to ratify the new Constitution.

The "Anti-Federalist Papers" were a collection of essays written by various authors in 1787-88. They were published in the New York press and were intended to persuade the public not to ratify the new Constitution.

The "Declaration of Independence" was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. It declared the thirteen American colonies to be free and independent states, no longer under British rule.

"The Home is now in the fourth year of its existence, and it is beginning to assume the character of a substantial and successful enterprise. It is well known throughout the State, and for its wares finds ready and constant sale. Occasional complaints which were at first brought in concerning the workmanship of the brooms of the Home have now almost entirely ceased; and as to the work of the cane-seating department, we challenge comparison. So, that the patronage which is now extended by the public is prompted no more by sympathy than by the ordinary motives in business dealings. Should the Home continue to successfully advance along the path now opened before it, its progress will in a short time confirm and justify the most sanguine predictions of its friends and supporters. * * * * * The Home is a manufacturing establishment, and its controlling statutes should, as far as consistent with the safety of a public trust, give the management the flexibility which is necessary in the successful prosecution of business of that kind. The Home proves to be an inestimable blessing to many homeless and helpless blind; has re-inspired them with hope and promised them the means of partial independence, and it should be cherished by the State as one of the most *beneficent of its institutions.*"

From the last report of the Superintendent of the Ohio Working Home for the Blind, we quote:

"The success of the last six months against the first six months convinces us that the institution can be made nearly, if not quite, self-sustaining. The greatest difficulty to overcome is, lack of sufficient working capital with which to buy material where it can be bought the cheapest, and also to buy in larger quantities at better figures."

Mr. H. L. Hall, Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men (himself a blind man), organized in 1874, the *first* Working Home for blind people in this country. Writing in relation to an Industrial Home for the Blind of Iowa, says:

"In my judgment there should be an educational institution like your college in Vinton for the blind; another, an industrial establishment, with annexes, etc., making two in all for the blind."

From Mr. Hall's last report (1889), we quote:

"The amount of work done exceeds that of any previous year. The earnings of workmen were \$18,974.11, or nearly \$128.00 each. And this is a single year's work of men who, not long ago, were hopelessly idle at their own homes or the recipients of charity.

"With us, under the stimulus of steady employment, and the self-respect aroused by self-support, they are active and industrious.

Constant occupation, under the discipline of the Home, keeps the body healthful and the mind cheerful.

*"The Home is not able to meet the applications for admission. There is not a vacant bed in the house, nor place to put one, nor room for an additional machine in the work-shop. * * * We need room for two hundred and fifty workmen."*

Writing of the character of the institution, he states :

"If the Home were a hospital or an asylum, there might be more ground for questioning the propriety of asking State aid, as there is a large number of these already in existence. But it is neither. It has no children nor superannuated men, and no other institution fills its place.

"The object is to gather together deserving, able-bodied men, whose support is at present a tax on the community, to teach them useful trades, furnish them material, give them employment, and pay each what he earns. If the workman can support himself, the community is relieved of the burden; if not, we claim that our method is economical for the reason that it costs less to aid a man who is doing all he can for himself than to maintain him in idleness, to say nothing of the moral effect on the character of the man."

The Pennsylvania Working Home for the Blind is unquestionably the best institution of the kind in existence; perhaps, therefore, it is best to allude briefly to pay of employes, and the conditions required for admission. They must be of good moral character, and promise to conform to the rules and regulations of the home. Persons of impaired sight are admitted; these are useful aids to the totally blind and to the workshop, in many ways. All pay to the Home for board, washing and mending, \$2.25 per week; this amount is deducted from their weekly earnings. Of the employes who board at their homes, nothing is required in payment for use of shop and machinery. They are paid same wages as inmates, and must conform to all requirements as to conduct same as members of the household. All who are able-bodied, work ten hours a day. The superintendent remarked that he had difficulty in keeping the men from overwork; he had no trouble to get them into the workshop on time, but some difficulty in getting them to cease work at the hour of closing.

New beginners do not earn enough to pay board, etc., except in rare cases; an exact account, however, is kept of earnings and indebtedness, and in a few months they are usually able to balance accounts. The inmates rise at 6, breakfast at 6:30 and begin work

at 7 o'clock. Dinner from 12 to 1 o'clock; after which work until 5 or 6 o'clock, followed by supper, evening devotion, reading of newspapers and books by one of their own number, or by some philanthropic person who may volunteer for that purpose. All retire at 10 o'clock, the interim being spent as above, and in music, and such amusements as chess, dominoes, etc. These blind persons, hitherto burdens to themselves, are thus really ushered into a new life; a life of activity and usefulness; their moral and religious nature cultured; and in this way made better men and women, and elevated to the standard of intelligent American citizens.

From all sources, educational as well as industrial, to which the Commission has applied for information upon this important subject, comes the universal recommendation for the establishment of a working home for adult blind. The Commission could fill many pages with quotations similar to those given. There is no dissenting voice among those who have given their life's work to the education, training and care of the blind.

OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR WORK.

The Commission visited the leading educational institutions of the United States and Canada, and gave special attention and consideration to the workshops and machinery connected with each institution, the articles manufactured, and character of work.

We were very much gratified with the general excellence of all work done by the blind at each institution visited. They were found to be especially proficient in the manufacture of brooms, brushes, mattresses, hammocks, rugs, fly-nets; in the work of cane-seating, carpet-weaving, upholstering, knitting, crocheting, plain sewing, basket-making, and in fact, all kinds of willow work. It should be borne in mind that the work here enumerated, as being done at these schools or colleges for the blind, forms a part of the educational curriculum—manual training—and it is not intended as a work-shop, except to afford employment beyond the time devoted to the regular studies.

The boys and girls, who attend these schools, are generally taught these trades, but do not remain longer than necessary to complete the school course. They advance, and graduate; yet experience has shown that where they are thrown out upon the world, into competition with those possessed with the sense of sight, and in competition with improved and complicated machinery, which they cannot use, they find it exceedingly difficult to provide a living. Some do, but a very large per cent utterly fail.

The Commission consulted many of the leading educators of the blind of the country, and beg to acknowledge many courtesies extended by directors, superintendents and teachers of institutions visited.

The Commission is especially indebted for valuable suggestions made upon the subject of its investigation to Mr. Anagnos, Director of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, at South Boston, Mass.; Mr. Wait, Superintendent of the New York City School for the Blind; Mr. Clement, Superintendent of the New York State Institution for the Blind; Mr. Battles, Superintendent of the Pennsylvania School for the Blind; Mr. Miller, Superintendent of the Ohio Institution for the Blind; Mr. Barnes, Superintendent, and Hon. D. L. Case, Resident Director of the Michigan Institution for the Blind; Mr. Jacobs, Superintendent of the Indiana Institution for the Blind; Mr. Wickens, Head Master, and Mr. Truss, Trades Instructor of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Training of the Blind, located at Brantford, Ontario.

FACILITIES WITHIN THE STATE.

By section 3 of the act creating this Commission, among other duties imposed, is that of ascertaining "the facilities within the State, or that can be secured, and propositions or proposals, with reference to the proper and practicable employment of the blind people within the State."

The Commission has had extensive correspondence with Mayors, members of Councils, Boards of Trade, and citizens of the principal cities and towns of Iowa in relation to the location of such Industrial Home, the facilities for manufacturing and disposal of products.

It would serve no useful purpose to publish the correspondence thus had, as no formal and definite proposition has been submitted to the Commission, for reasons which become apparent when it is stated that many cities and towns of Iowa have considered the objects of such an Industrial Home, and the advantages to be derived from its location, and have shown a readiness to make liberal donations of land, and offer other inducements to secure it. Indeed, a spirit of rivalry has been manifested, and it is evident that the competition for its location, in desirable localities, will be sufficient to secure ample grounds for the uses and purposes of such a Home without expense to the State.

In view of the foregoing facts there can reasonably be but one conclusion reached, that such an institution is needed—even

demanding by the necessities of the blind population within our State. Not alone from humanitarian considerations, but from an economic standpoint.

Such an institution is no longer an experiment. We are not without precedent, nor without results. Eminent men in all parts of the civilized world have, for many years past, had this subject under consideration.

Congresses and conventions of representatives of the principal nations of the world have discussed it in all its forms, and from these men of extended experience we have light to point the way, heretofore shrouded in darkness.

The question may be asked, why we should undertake such a work in Iowa, while we have an excellent school at Vinton? The answer may be found in the fact that the school is purely educational, and the proposed Industrial Home is designed to aid those who have gone out from the school, and those who have, and those who may lose their sight in later life. It is designed to meet a want which the school has not filled, and cannot fill. The school is intended to, and does, prepare them for more efficient service in life's work, but cannot supply their continuing needs. Upon this subject Dr. Armitage, Honorable Secretary of the British and Foreign Blind Association, and an eminent writer upon education, training, and the employment of the blind, says: "It is perfectly certain that even in the simplest handicrafts a man whose mind has been developed by good education must always have a decided advantage over one who has not been so fortunate; and heavily weighted as the blind are in the race of life, success or failure often depends to a great degree upon the quality of their early education." Again he says: "I may here remark that from a long and intimate acquaintance with the blind and their wishes, I am quite certain that the great majority would infinitely prefer a life of honest toil to living on the bounty of others; and the reason that so many must be assisted by public or private charity is that, though willing to work, they are generally uninstructed; and even those who can work have experienced difficulty in disposing of the products of their industry."

Mr. Martin, manager of the Royal Blind Asylum of Edinburgh, in a paper upon the subject, "Industrial Employment of the Blind," read at the Jubilee celebration of the foundation of "the Yorkshire School for the Blind," said: "I am not here to declare that none of the blind ever rise to eminence in music or literature; but I am bound to give the result of my experience, and say, that the best

thing we can do for the great majority of the blind is to employ them industrially in institutions, *work-shops* I prefer to call them, and to seek greatly to increase the number of departments in which they can be remuneratively employed."

Mr. Moldenhawer, of the Copenhagen institution, in a paper read before the "Congress of Instructors and Friends of the Blind," recently held at Cologne, said: "The main object of all education is spontaniety, which, in consequence of their defect, is difficult to attain in case of the blind. In the case of the seeing, the surroundings and requirements of home promote it; in the case of the blind, the institutions must do it, and not only provide a general education, but also a means of earning a livelihood."

We have before referred to the different kinds of work which blind people can successfully engage in; it remains to be seen what they can accomplish in Iowa, where the material used in their labors can be had in abundance, at less cost than in places visited by the Commission. We need only cite a few instances, showing the results of systematic labor—of institutions such as contemplated for our own State.

In 1883, "The Workshops for Industrious Blind," at Belfast, Ireland, had forty-three workmen employed. There was sold from their warehouse and shop, in that year, \$22,000 worth of manufactured goods. In the same year, the "Liverpool Workshop for Outdoor Blind" employed one hundred and twenty-six blind workmen, and the sales of their manufactured articles amounted to \$65,000.

In our own country we may point with pride to the many educational institutions, provided and sustained for the education and training of the blind, but we take especial pleasure in noting and here mentioning the grand work accomplished by "The Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men," under the skillful management of H. L. Hall, its founder.

Previous to the founding of this institution, in 1874, there was none other of its kind in America. *Then* it was an experiment, prompted by the hope and belief that blind workmen could be associated so as to gain the advantages of wholesale purchases and sales, through an intelligent supervision and economical management, and that under these conditions their labor would be nearly, if not wholly, self-supporting. Beginning with six inmates, its first annual statement reported 13,900 brooms made, and sales made amounting to \$4,600.00. The institution has steadily grown in numbers, efficiency, and in the products of its workmen.

From the report of the present year we gather the following facts:

Inmates.....	98
Employed from outside.....	54
Whole number employed.....	152

MANUFACTURES OF THE YEAR.

Brooms.....	461,078
Brushes.....	8,640
Yards of carpet.....	3,924
Mattresses.....	83
Chairs recaned.....	614
Total sales.....	\$ 61,651.40
Stock remaining on hand.....	15,613.00
Paid workmen.....	18,974.11
To each workman (average).....	128.57

Some of these men engaged in this Home are employed in churches on Sundays as organ-blowers. With these outside profits the total earnings of the men would be over \$20,000.00.

What has been done in Pennsylvania, under some disadvantages, may be done in Iowa more successfully. We have in our midst the blind who need the employment; we produce in abundance the material used in their manufactures, and have ample facilities for distribution of the products of their labor.

The broom corn, used in great quantities, we have within our own borders, while eastern factories, in great part, rely on the western States to produce the material they use. The southwestern part of the State is specially well adapted to the growing of a superior article of broom corn, so largely used in these workshops of the blind. One county alone, Montgomery, produced last year over 300 tons; although of late years the product has largely fallen off in shipments, because of low prices and distance to markets. This manufactory would afford a market at home.

Another form of industry, which we desire to mention, and which is successfully carried on at "The Ontario Institution for the Blind," located at Brantford, Canada, is that of basket-making and general willow work. The willows are grown at very little cost, in suitable grounds adjoining the institution. The work of preparing the material and the completed articles is all done by the blind, practically without any machinery, and in every particular is equal to the best work produced by sighted persons.

We have in Iowa every facility for producing all material used in these manufactured articles, and in many instances, at less cost

than our Eastern friends, who have succeeded under these disadvantages.

It is proper to state, that in all branches of manufactures herein referred to, blind women may be successfully employed.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMISSIONERS.

The Commissioners are of the opinion such an Industrial Home, as indicated herein, is needed in Iowa, and should be established. For that purpose there should be ample ground for the use of such Home, and the following buildings erected:

One manufactory;

One store-house;

One building for men;

One building for women;

One building for Superintendent, and the necessary out-buildings.

None of these buildings should be more than two stories high, but should be built of plain, substantial material, as nearly fire-proof as may be.

After having examined workshops and other necessary buildings of institutions of this kind, the Commission submits the following estimates of the buildings, above referred to, which estimate includes machinery and all furnishings, ready for use:

For manufactory for two hundred workmen, including machinery and steam heating for all buildings	\$ 30,000.00
The store-house for raw material and manufactured products	5,000.00
For building for men, including furnishing.....	10,000.00
For building for women, including dining-room, for all employes, laundry and machinery and furnishings.....	10,000.00
For Superintendent's building.....	3,500.00
For out-buildings and barn	2,500.00
For fencing and other improvement of ground.....	1,500.00
For purchasing fund for two years.....	12,500.00
For contingent fund for two years.....	10,000.00
Total.....	\$ 85,000.00

The Commissioners in making estimate for the manufactory have considered the prospective need of the State for succeeding years, and have endeavored to reach a medium as may avoid the expensive necessity of enlarging a building too small, or one adequate only for present needs. We estimate the number of blind, who will avail themselves of the workshops, sufficient to occupy all the room of such buildings within the next biennial period following their completion.

CONCLUSION.

In this, our final report, the Commissioners have presented the result of their investigations in as concise form as possible, without doing injustice to that class of our fellow citizens so deeply interested in the subject, numbering nearly two thousand. The General Assembly is not asked to appropriate money without as full knowledge of the facts as it is possible to give in a report necessarily brief.

In the institutions visited, the inmates are kept in active, cheerful employment, and at less expense than their maintenance elsewhere. It is better economy to help a man to work than to support him in idleness; and that is the truest charity which makes and keeps him happy, contented and self-respecting, in the knowledge that he is doing all he can to help himself.

Another important fact, not hitherto specially alluded to, should be mentioned; every year many adult citizens are by accident deprived of sight. Inexpressibly sad as it is to discover that the little infant just born into the world, can never look upon its beauties, it is even more sad, to contemplate the feelings of the bread-winner of a family accidentally deprived of sight and suddenly prevented from earning the sustenance of those who are near and dear to him. The Home for adult blind would provide employment for this class of unfortunates. It is the aim of the friends of these industrial institutions to divest the work from every and any tendency to pauperization, the plan is to elevate to a plane above the feeling of dependence.

To the various movements in their behalf, in the educational and industrial institutions of the country, the blind themselves have nobly responded to the efforts made in their behalf, and have proved themselves worthy of all that has been done or can be done to ameliorate their condition and develop their capacities and talents. One visit to the institutions, heretofore referred to, would astonish any inquirer by the wonderful evidence of the cultivation and refinement of the capacities of the blind, and of their diligence and perseverance. It is not that blindness is really no affliction; it is not that they are unconscious of being deprived of something which others around them are enjoying; it is the chivalrous, noble, heroic determination not to repine at what they have not, but rather to press onward to a greater appreciation of the many things God has given them to enjoy. Greater achievements can be hoped for from

a blind man held up by energy and spurred on by ambition, than from a seeing man who has no heart in his work.

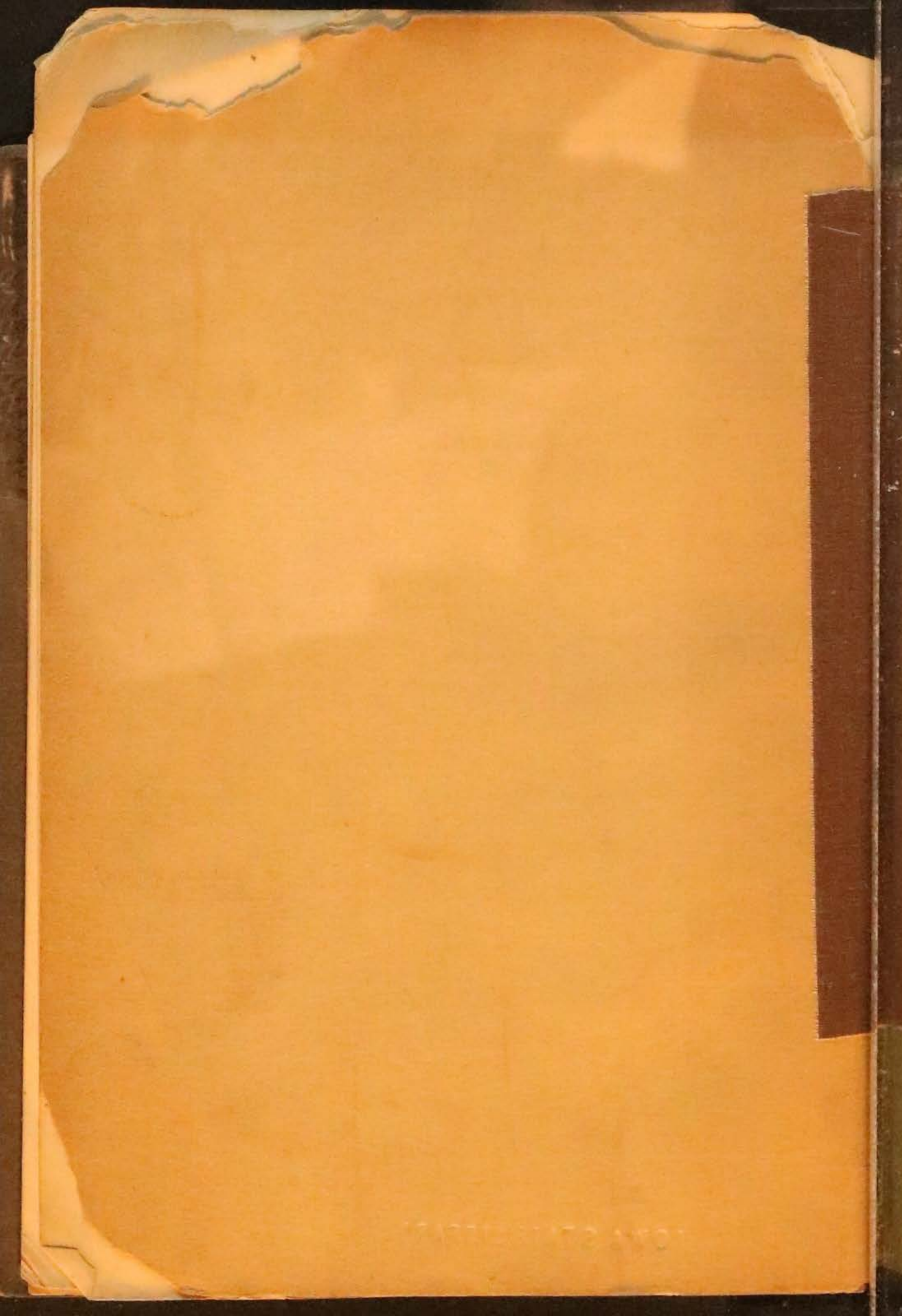
The institution recommended in this report by the Commissioners, after a careful investigation, is believed to be founded on the solid rock of equity. Iowa educates her blind, then leaves them to eke out an existence as best they can. It has been shown that a large percentage, unless assisted, cannot maintain themselves. The manufactory proposed will round out and perfect the noble work of the State in this direction.

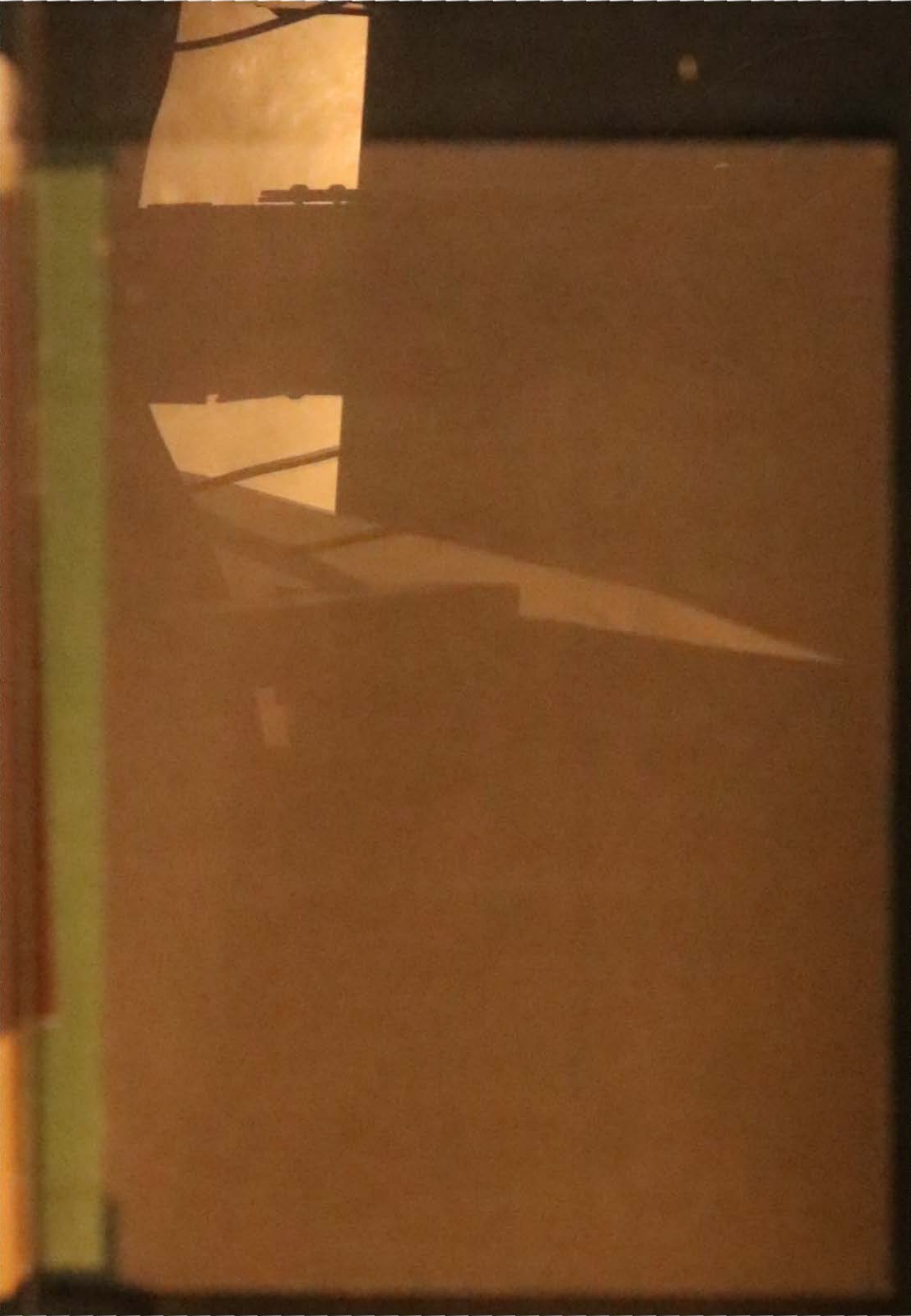
The cause of the blind has taken a strong hold upon the hearts of the people of Iowa; it is deeply rooted in the letter and spirit of its laws, and we are confident will not be abandoned; it draws its vitality from a widespread sense of justice and fairness.

The Commissioners in the discharge of the duties devolving upon them, as prescribed in section 3, of chapter 190, the act of the Twenty-second General Assembly, have, in accordance therewith, examined the various institutions in which the blind are employed, the material and machinery used, and the products of such employment; and have herein referred to the facilities within our State for such an Industrial Home. In accordance with section 4 of said act, requiring the Commissioners, after investigation to report plans and recommendations, have complied therewith as far as seems necessary at this date. Plans for the workshop, storehouse and other buildings deemed necessary and recommended, are being prepared and can be submitted to the General Assembly if desired. The Commissioners fully agree in the recommendations made.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

L. A. REILEY,
D. M. FOX,
LORANA MATTICE,
Commissioners.





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