

REPORT

OF THE

JOINT COMMITTEE

OF THE

THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

APPOINTED TO VISIT

THE INSANE ASYLUM, AT MOUNT PLEASANT.

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REPORT.

TO THE THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA :

The joint committee appointed to visit the Iowa Hospital for the Insane, at Mt. Pleasant, have performed that duty, and beg leave to submit the following report :

We feel that we have made a very careful examination into all the details connected with the management of the institution, and take pleasure in saying that they are conducted in a manner that does much credit to those intrusted with such responsible duties.

The present number of patients in the Hospital is four hundred and three, of which two hundred and sixteen are males, and one hundred and eighty-seven are females. The Hospital was never intended to accommodate more than three hundred and fifty, so it will readily be seen that the building is very much crowded. Several rooms intended for parlors and reading-rooms have to be used as dormitories, and other means have to be resorted to, which, could it be avoided, should not be the case.

The present number of employees, not including resident officers, is seventy-eight, forty-one males and thirty-seven females, only two or three more than were employed two years ago. By an act of the Twelfth General Assembly the Board of Trustees were empowered to fix the salaries and wages of these officers and attendants. This has been done as follows, per annum :

Superintendent.....	\$1600.00
Assistant-Superintendent....	750.00
Second Assistant-Superintendent.....	600.00
Matron.....	300.00

The wages of male attendants are \$26.50 per month, and increasing one dollar per month for each year they continue in the service. Females receive from twelve to fourteen dollars per

month, with same increase. We consider this very low, and it seems to show a desire on the part of the Trustees to practice economy.

It is sad to contemplate the state of this unfortunate class of beings, yet we feel that everything is being done that great and good men can do, to cure those who are curable, and to make comfortable those who are not. The kind and tender manner in which the Superintendent and his assistants met each of these patients as we passed through these extensive wards, was everywhere apparent; and this must have been constantly the case, for each one, possessed of any remaining reason, seemed to expect this, and welcomed the friendly salutations with delight. Your committee took much pains to enquire of the more intelligent inmates, and of those attendants with whom we had a previous acquaintance, as to the every-day management of the hospital, and was satisfied that nothing was left undone that could add to their comforts. All the apartments are clear and orderly; the beds are clean and comfortable as any one could wish for; and the food, though plain, is well prepared, healthy, and evidently in sufficient quantity.

Your Committee examined into the details of the farming operations connected with the institution, and were highly pleased with the result. The farm is being rapidly cleared off and brought into cultivation, and there is now on hand cattle and other stock of excellent quality and great value, as will be seen by the report of the officers. In this way the articles of meat, butter and milk are furnished to the inmates at much less expense, and of better quality than could be supplied by the market.

Your Committee made particular inquiry into the manner in which the money appropriated by the Twelfth General Assembly, for several specific purposes, had been expended, and visited and inspected the mechanical improvements that had been made.

We find that one hundred and twenty acres of valuable rolling prairie lying conveniently on the west and south of the original premises have been procured; and, though the price paid was necessarily rather high, we believe the land was actually needed and will prove to be a good investment for the State. It appears, from all that we could learn, that land could not be procured within

the last two years so advantageously as at the time the purchase of additional land was recommended by the officers of the Hospital, four years ago, but we think the appropriation was judiciously expended. Negotiations are pending, we learned, for an additional tract of land, for which the \$2700 remaining undrawn at the close of the fiscal period will be appropriated.

The appropriation for furniture appears to have been expended in a legitimate manner, and has afforded no more than the means actually needed for that purpose. The furniture appears to be of good quality, and more than is necessary for a proper furnishing of the wards. Indeed we feel that still more liberal furnishing would perhaps give a little more house-like and cheerful appearance to the wards, which we believe is desirable for the highest welfare and comfort of the patients.

We regard the introduction of an apparatus for lighting the hospital with gasoline, burned as gas, as very successful. We saw it burning during one evening, and the light was scarcely inferior to that obtained from coal gas. The working of the apparatus we learned, is very equal and easily regulated, and being located in a distinct building, a little removed from other buildings, appears to be but little, if at all, exposed to those dangers attending the use of gasoline under less favorable circumstances, and is really, we think, attended with no more danger than the use of gas obtained from coal. We feel that the people of this State may be congratulated that the obvious danger from the use of kerosene in wards occupied by insane persons—who are often impulsive and mischievous, and generally not to be trusted with moveable fixtures, to say nothing of the danger from explosions of kerosene lamps, which will sometimes occur—has been so happily, and apparently successfully overcome.

All the land purchased needed some new fencing, and the old fences needed repairs. This appears to have been done as required; and a moderate expenditure made for improving the grounds.

We take pleasure in saying that a topographical survey of the farm and grounds is being made for the purpose of, and preparatory to entering upon a systematic laying out and improvement of

the premises belonging to the Hospital, gradually, as time and means will permit.

A cemetery lot has been purchased, as stated in the Superintendent's report, adjoining the hospital premises, and, we think, well located. The price paid was the sum appropriated, \$500.

The building of the new ironing and store-rooms, seems to have appropriately filled up a vacant space between adjacent buildings, and afforded conveniences which were much needed. The ironing room is not completed, but it was in such condition that it could be used during the past summer, during which season it is most needed. In it the patients who assist largely in the ironing for nearly five hundred persons have a comfortable place to work, which we believe could not be said of the previous ironing-room in the summer.

We think the painting, for which an appropriation was made, has been properly done; and in this respect, as in all others within our observation, the needed and necessary repairs are promptly attended to. In so large an institution the services of one painter are required most of the time, and no more work has been done, we think, than has been necessary for the proper preservation of the building.

The expenditures under the head of contingencies, have been principally for a new Branagan boiler, and a supply of fire-hose.

We deem these expenditures to have been judicious. The boiler appears to be an excellent steam generator, and we were assured that its use has effected a considerable saving of fuel. The officers of the hospital are fully assured of its successful working, and we think we may safely concur with them in their opinion of its merits. The purchase of an ample supply of fire-hose, we feel sure, should have been no longer delayed. It is stored, ready for use, in different places convenient of access, and when any occasion for its use may arise, but a few minutes will be required to make the necessary connections with the steam pumps; and with the present facilities for raising and generating steam, and the abundance of water, it would seem improbable that such extensive conflagrations can ever occur in this Hospital as have been so destructive to life and property in some States.

The total amount expended for the above purposes is \$24,871.45, leaving an unexpended balance on appropriation account of \$3,578.55, of which \$2,700 has not yet been drawn from the State Treasury. Of the whole amount unexpended it is expected \$2,600 will be expended for a certain desirable tract of land on the north side of the present premises, which will leave \$978.55 for completing the ironing-room, the purchase of some additional furniture, and some needed alterations in the gas pipes, which have been found to be of too small dimensions. These pipes are a part of the original construction. No portion of the gas pipes recently put up have proved to be defective. Vouchers for all the expenditures above enumerated are on file in the superintendent's office, and as soon as the several accounts are closed up, duplicates will be filed with the Auditor of State.

The attention of your committee was called to the subject of some improvements and alterations recommended and believed to be necessary by the officers of the hospital. Some of these recommendations we believe are quite necessary, and all seem desirable, for the reasons set forth in the biennial report of the Superintendent. Plans and specifications for a new barn, a new chimney, and for raising the boiler-house one story, were shown us, and meet our approval. A competent hydraulic engineer is preparing plans for a settling reservoir and filter, of which an approximate estimate has been furnished.

During our visit we were afforded an illustration of the annoyance that arises frequently at certain seasons of the year, from the heavy smoke and foul odors eddying about the angles of the building, in consequence of the insufficient height of the present chimney, and besides, if a new chimney is built on the plan proposed by the Superintendent, a more active ventilation can be effected in some of the wards, which seems to your committee desirable.

We think the necessary means should not be withheld for completing the arrangements for an abundant supply of pure, healthy water. The present works are quite successful, with the exception of the inconvenience suffered by turbid water common to all small streams in that section of the State, and it is believed that that inconvenience can be remedied and the water rendered perfectly pure at all times. The desirableness of this no one will seriously question, and when

the present system of obtaining water is perfected by the addition of the works recommended, there will probably be no further call for aid from the State Treasury on that account.

New steam boilers are doubtless an absolute necessity, as we feel assured from all that we could learn, that the old boilers are nearly worn out, and unreliable and unsafe.

We might speak in detail of the other items for which appropriations are asked; but the reasons are sufficiently set forth in the reports of the officers of the Hospital, in which we fully concur.

The crowded condition of the Hospital, which was very obvious to your committee, leads them to consider the subject of further provisions for the insane at the earliest possible time. Taking the lowest estimate of the number of the insane in the State, as one in one thousand of the population, which is doubtless below the real number, as a basis of calculation, there must be more than one thousand insane persons in the State. At least two-thirds this number need the care, protection, and custody afforded by a well regulated hospital,—enough to fill two institutions like the one at Mount Pleasant, and before any further accommodation can possibly be provided, the number needing care and treatment will be greater than it is now. There are many reasons why the insane should be amply provided for in institutions especially provided for them. While most other diseases may be best treated at home, it is not so with insanity. It is the general experience, established by the results of a half century, that insanity can be best and most successfully treated by strangers, only in institutions specially provided for the management of this class of diseases. Every community should have more than the barest accommodations, that will suffice to provide for the insane, when crowded to their utmost capacity; and yet this will be the case, probably, when the hospital at Independence is fully completed. If room is not afforded for the prompt admission to the hospital of cases of mental disease as they arise, they are neglected and improperly managed, and few get well, and for long years, perhaps, are a burden upon the community for support. On the other hand, if cases are promptly sent to the hospital eighty or ninety per cent recover. In the hospital at Mount Pleasant a little more than seventy per cent of all cases

who have been admitted within one year from the period of the commencement of their disorders have recovered; while of all who have been admitted only about thirty-three per cent have recovered. A financial aspect of this question should not be overlooked. Where one or two hundred dollars may suffice to effect a cure of a case of insanity, many times that amount may not be sufficient to support one that is incurable through life. At the same time, those who recover may be valuable citizens, and at least support, or contribute to the support of their families, while those who become incurable may be for many and long years a burden upon the public, and, perhaps, their families also. If ample provisions are made all cases of insanity are more likely to be placed in the hospital promptly and retained till cured. This will, as abundant experience seems to show, increase the ratio of recoveries, diminish the proportion of the insane to the whole population, lessen the cost of support, and perhaps spare the community the shock it now and then receives from the acts of some irresponsible person who should be under some restraint, not only to promote his restoration, but for the protection of the public from acts of violence.

In every well regulated hospital for the insane, as much care as possible is taken to secure the best classification,—to bring together in the different wards those who will be companionable, or at least, not an annoyance to each other. Of course no one would for a moment think of placing the calm and violent, the quiet and noisy, or the neat and filthy in the same ward together, if the arrangement could possibly be avoided; but there are many grades between these extreme classes, comprising individuals of widely different character, who require for their best good, ample facilities for complete classification. A dozen classes for each sex is found to be much better than only ten, and a greater number is now almost universally recommended by hospital directors throughout the country.

For the above reasons chiefly, it may be well to consider if it will not be best for the State to enlarge the Hospital at Mt. Pleasant, while prosecuting the work at Independence, in accordance with the suggestions of the officers, contained in their fourth and fifth biennial reports. The addition of three wards to each wing of the building, will afford accommodation for about one hundred and twenty patients,

and afford an improved classification and generally improved facilities for the successful treatment of insanity. As none of the present well arranged operative departments will require any addition on account of any enlargement of the Hospital, it seems probable that the needed accommodation for the insane of the State, can here be provided earlier and at a less cost than elsewhere. A precedent for such an enlargement is found in the fact that no less than fourteen American hospitals for the insane have been enlarged and their capacity greatly increased during the past few years, and the enlargement has been in every instance, we are led to believe, esteemed a great improvement. A new institution should not be built in haste. The Hospital at Mt. Pleasant was nearly six years in the process of erection, and in many places there are evidences of haste, which must sooner or later lead to costly repairs. The facilities for enlargement are very fine, all building materials near at hand, and such a step will permit of a more leisurely and careful construction of the new Hospital, an advantage which should not be lightly estimated.

The cost will probably be not far from \$1,000.00 for each patient provided for, which in building a new hospital, the cost will not fall below \$1,700.00 for each patient.

Respectfully submitted,

A. R. PIERCE,

On the part of the Senate.

J. D. MILES,

J. P. KETCHUM,

On the part of the House.