

HISTORY OF THE STATE TRAINING SCHOOL, ELDORA, IOWA

On March 31, 1868 the Twelfth Iowa General Assembly passed an act to establish and organize a State Reform School for juvenile offenders. Temporarily located at Salem in Henry County, the school was under the management of a Board of Trustees, made up of one from each Congressional District.

The trustees took immediate steps to lease for a period of ten years what was then known as "White's Manual Labor Institute", a property located in the North part of Lee county and consisting of 1400 acres of land, with several farm dwellings and a large but uncompleted two story brick building. A committee appointed by the trustees finished the building and on September 21, 1868, the Board let it be known that the Reform School, as it was then called was ready to receive boys. On October 7, 1868, the first boy admitted to the school was received from Jasper County.

During the first year of its operation, forty-five boys and one girl was taken into the school. The law at first admitted both sexes under eighteen years of age, but in 1871 the General Assembly instructed the trustees to organize a separate school for girls.

Not wanting to build on leased land, and in search of a permanent location for the school, the General Assembly of 1871 appointed a board of commissioners to select a suitable site and appropriated \$45,000 for the erection of buildings.

A number of Iowa communities offered lands and other donations as an inducement to have the school located in their areas, and the trustees inspected half a dozen localities before selecting Eldora as the best site.

In order to secure the location of the school in their community, the citizens of Eldora and vicinity had donated 440 acres of Iowa's best farm land. "It seems that nature has done everything to make this one of the most lovely sites for such an institution," wrote the school's first superintendent, Joseph McCarty, in his biennial report of 1873. Hardin County citizens later donated an additional eighty acres to the school, and the state subsequently bought 240 acres, making a total of 760 acres at the turn of the century.

Contracts had been let for the erection of buildings at the new location, and by the spring of 1873 two, two-story family dwellings and a larger building containing facilities for a schoolroom, dining hall, and manufacturing purposes were ready for occupancy. In April 1873, 116 boys were transferred to their new home in Eldora.

By 1898, the year during which the Board of Control of State Institutions took charge of the institutions, the school had six family buildings, a hospital building, one barn, an icehouse, a laundry, a chapel, two workshop buildings, a vegetable storehouse, and a main building.

A huge turreted structure was begun in 1876 and completed a few years later as funds became available. Additional buildings have been constructed since that time to meet the needs of a growing school population. A gymnasium and an academic school building, built between 1907 and 1922, are still in use, new cottages have replaced all of the old housing units. An auto shop, dietary building and a vocational building are quite recent additions to the school.

In the twentieth General Assembly, Senator Enoch W. Eastman introduced a bill which was enacted into law, and the Reform School for a number of years became officially known as the Iowa Industrial School.

The name appears to have been well-chosen, for during this period the emphasis was placed on work or industrial training as the most effectual corrective treatment for the boys. The law stated that the boy was to be admitted to the school "to be trained in piety, morality, and such industrial pursuits as might be adapted to his age and capability".

The founders never intended that the School should be a penal institution. They believed that "children are more properly the subjects of discipline than punishment," and that it was more in accord with the times to "labor for prevention of crime rather than to punish the criminal." The Executive Committee of the institution, during its regular session on January 24, 1872, passed the following resolution:

"Whereas we have been informed that one of the employees of the school, in correcting a boy, struck him with the handle of a broom and also kicked him, therefore be it resolved that the trustees of this institution do not approve of such chastisement, and think that no kind of corporal punishment should be resorted to except in very extreme cases".

There have been many changes in policy and procedures since the first of the approximately 22,000 boys who have lived at the school was admitted over a century ago. For a long period of time emphasis was placed on a long term detention and rigid group discipline in a military-like atmosphere. Case records reveal that toilsome tasks and corporal punishment were quite freely dispensed.

While the practice of institutionalizing boys for long periods of time brought favorable results in some areas of activity, in many others its effectiveness was doubtful. Thus, although providing the time needed to develop a band which won country wide renown, it also presented a serious custodial problem to a limited staff by bringing about a high population which at times totaled more than 700 boys. Furthermore, the lad who was held for a long period of time, often until he became twenty-one years of age, tended to have become dependent upon institutional routine.

During the noon mealtime on August 29, 1945, there occurred at the Iowa Training School for Boys, as the institution was then known, a tumultous disturbance which was to bring about a complete reappraisal of the school's purpose, philosophy and program. Brutually extreme disciplinary action which had been taken against seven boys who, it was believed, planned to escape, resulted in a riot during which one hundred and twenty-seven boys escaped to disperse over the countryside and towns in the vicinity.

The subsequent investigation eventually led to the initiation of new policies and procedures. The stress on rigid group discipline gave way to a broader and more diversified program designed to develop fundamental skills and abilities, and thus prepare the boy for useful and self supporting citizenship.

In 1961 a still more comprehensive program was inaugurated with an emphasis upon individualized treatment. This individualized philosophy is based on the belief that the boys of the Training school, having been neglected by their home communities are confronted with a personal adjustment problem. Since it is the function of the Training School to improve the attitude of the boy toward society, this can best be achieved by discovering the nature of the boy's problem and offering him individual training.

In 1961, the Administration Building was dedicated and the old building was torn down.

Cooper Memorial Hospital was dedicated on July 10th, 1969. The new structure was dedicated to the memory of Fred Nevin Cooper, who was Superintendent at the Training School from October 1, 1945 until his sudden death from a heart ailment on June 8, 1947.

The two story building houses a clinic on the main floor for Medical and Dental facilities, a 14 bed infirmary and dietary kitchen. Psychology, Family Therapy and Chemical Dependency units are housed in the lower level.

The newest building is the Ella Stewart Hall, named for one of the founders of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, who taught at the Training School from 1883 to 1891. This building was dedicated on June 4, 1972.

This building provides a secure setting for 20 students who need highly structured care and treatment.

The present campus covers 366 acres. The institution has been under Department of Human Services since July 1, 1968.

Iowa reduced the age of majority from 21 years to 19 years on July 1, 1972 and to 18 years on July 1, 1973. These changes resulted in lower population in the institution.

The name of the facility was changed from Iowa Training School for Boys to Eldora Training School on January 1, 1981 and to State Training School on July 1, 1982.

SUPERINTENDENTS:

Joseph McCarty	1868-1875	Otto Von Krog	1922-1945
The Rev. Charles Johnson	1875-1877	Fred N. Cooper	1945-1947
The Rev. M. S. Winans	1877-1880	Charles Reed	1947-1948
B. J. Miles	1880-1891	Hollis L. Miles	1949-1961
D.M. Crouse	1891-1892	Anthony P. Travisono	1961-1969
B. J. Miles	1892-1904	Carle F. O'Neil	1969-1973
Co. L. D. Drake	1904-1907	James W. Hoy	1973 -1986
W. L. Kuser	1907-1922		

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