

Eighteenth annual report of the New York Asylum for Idiots : transmitted to the Legislature Jan. 19, 1869 / New York State Asylum for Idiots.

Contributors

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EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

Transmitted to the Legislature Jan. 19, 1869.

ALBANY :
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1869.



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STATE OF NEW YORK.
IN SENATE,
JANUARY 10, 1890.
TRUSTEES.

JAMES H. TITUS,	FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,	LYMAN CLARY,
ALLEN MUNROE,	SANDFORD E. CHURCH,
HIRAM PUTNAM,	E. W. LEAVENWORTH.

State Officers—Ex-Officio Trustees.

JOHN T. HOFFMAN, Gov'r.	ALLEN C. BEACH, Lieut.-Gov'r.
H. A. NELSON, Sec. of State,	WM. F. ALLEN, Comptroller,
A. B. WEAVER, Supt. of Pub. Instruction.	

Permanent Chairman.

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

Secretary and Treasurer.

ALLEN MUNROE.

Executive Committee.

E. W. LEAVENWORTH,	JAMES H. TITUS,
LYMAN CLARY.	

OFFICERS.

Superintendent.

HERVEY B. WILBUR, M. D.

Assistant Superintendent.

JOHN VAN DUYN, M. D.

Matron.

MISS ALVIRA WOOD.

House-Keeper.

MRS. HARRIET LOESCHER.

Teachers.

MISS S. P. YOUNG,	MRS. M. E. COOK,
MISS C. F. LORING,	MISS M. AMMIDON,
MISS M. McCOUGHTRY.	

Steward.

MR. WILLIAM A. WOOD.

STATE OF NEW YORK.

No. 14.

I N S E N A T E,

January 19, 1869.

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

To the Legislature of the State of New York:

Agreeably to the provisions of the act establishing the said Asylum, the Trustees of the institution respectfully submit this, their eighteenth annual report.

The total cash receipts for the year ending Sept. 30th, 1868, as by Treasurer's report herewith annexed, were as follows:

1867.		
October 1st.	Cash from State Treasurer,.....	\$10,000 00
December 21st.	“ “	5,000 00
1868.		
March and April.	“ Co. treasurers, for clothing,	2,353 75
March 12th.	“ State Treasurer,.....	5,000 00
May 15th.	“ “	4,000 00
June 23rd.	“ “	5,200 00
Sept. 30th.	Over draft,	1,249 48
		<hr/>
		\$32,803 23
Cash from friends of pay-pupils,.....		4,450 27
Due Superintendent for bills paid,		148 62
		<hr/>
		\$37,402 12
		<hr/>

The expenditures for the same period were as follows:

Provisions and supplies of all kinds,	\$12,153 46
Fuel,	1,562 15
Gas,	789 51
Furniture and furnishing articles,	1,174 71
Farm, garden and stable,	1,256 94
Repairs, improvements and additions,	2,138 74
Refitting laundry,	905 00
Paints, oil, glass, drugs and medicines,	550 61
School books, apparatus and stationery,	149 94
Salaries of officers and teachers,	5,027 76
Wages of attendants and servants and farm labor,	5,114 49
Clothing,	2,038 39
Rent of land,	235 00
Insurance,	202 90
Freight and express,	47 07
Printing,	29 50
Postage,	37 84
Interest on loan,	149 71
Traveling expenses of trustees,	76 50
Traveling expenses of Superintendent,	58 89
Sending children home (refunded),	64 54
Water,	325 00
Miscellaneous expenses,	70 88
Over draft at bank, Oct. 1st, 1867,	3,242 59
	<hr/>
	\$37,402 12

On the 30th of Sept., 1868, the asylum was in debt as follows:

Over draft at bank,	\$1,249 48
For supplies of various kinds,	1,952 67
Salaries of officers and teachers,	1,187 50
	<hr/>
	\$4,389 65

The assets at same date were as follows:

Due from individuals for board, instruction, and from counties for clothing State pupils,	\$2,463 79
Provisions and supplies, farm products, clothing and materials available for support of current year,	2,330 00
	<hr/>
	\$4,793 79

It will thus be seen, that, reckoning all the assets available for current year's support, the asylum was substantially out of debt on the 30th of Sept., 1868. That is, the assets were equal to its liabilities at that date.

Looking only at the cash assets, the asylum would appear to be in debt, at that date, \$1,925.86, which is some 6 per cent. of its annual expenditure.

The Legislature actually appropriated to meet the current expenses of the present year, the sum of \$26,200. This was allowing only \$206 a year for each of the 126 state pupils in the institution. But the experience of the last three or four years shows that this amount is not sufficient. The actual cost of maintenance and instruction for each pupil, with the prevailing prices of everything in the way of domestic consumption and with the present prices of labor, will not fall short of \$225 a year.

It is hardly necessary for the trustees to add that even this amount is no more proportionately, than \$150 was, in former years.

They are therefore constrained to ask an appropriation of \$3,000 to meet the present indebtedness and the deficiency likely to occur in the finances the present year; and for the coming year the sum of \$28,000.

Without such enlarged allowance for the necessities of the asylum, there will be an annually recurring indebtedness, until the cost of supplies, &c., have fallen back to the standard of former times. The question cannot be met by reducing the number of pupils, for the reason that a small reduction in the number would not affect much the cost of support of the institution—nor could the trustees under the present law well refuse pupils, while there was a vacant bed. The fact already is, that the State provides by law for the instruction of every deaf-mute and blind child in the State, whose friends may choose to avail themselves of the benefits of the State provision. But in the case of children of deficient intelligence, it has as yet not exceeded, in its provision for their education, the moderate limits possible with the single asylum, whose interests they represent. For the present then and till further provision is made, pressing applications for admission will have to be refused.

There are at this time 138 pupils, leaving a vacancy for only two more—140 being the full capacity of the house. In this connection the trustees will repeat the conviction expressed in several of their former reports that there is positive necessity for additional accommodation and provision for training and educating that class of feeble-minded children who are left without the benefits which the limited number at this asylum enjoy.

The observation and experience of the trustees in the management of this asylum have convinced them that there should be established a *custodial* institution for the care and protection of that class of idiots who, from age or disease, are not suitable inmates for this. This subject the Legislature will find brought to their special attention in the Superintendent's report to the board hereunto annexed.

The buildings are all in good repair, excepting the want of paint on the exterior and a renewal of the heating apparatus, which thirteen years' use has greatly deteriorated, and will in time require a special appropriation from the Legislature. The statistics of the domestic and school affairs of the Asylum are fully detailed in the Superintendent's report, above referred to.

The trustees again have the satisfaction of expressing their praise of the Superintendent and his subordinates for the faithful performance of their arduous duties.

JAMES H. TITUS,
FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,
ALLEN MUNROE,
E. W. LEAVENWORTH,
S. E. CHURCH,

JOHN T. HOFFMAN, *Governor, &c.*,
ALLEN C. BEACH, *Lieut.-Governor*,
W. F. ALLEN, *Comptroller*.
ABRAM B. WEAVER, *Sup. Pub. Inst.*
EX-OFFICIO.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

To the Trustees of the New York Asylum for Idiots:

GENTLEMEN: The eighteenth annual report of the Superintendent of the institution is herewith respectfully submitted.

The whole number of pupils in the Asylum during the school year, terminating September 1st, 1868, was 149. The number in actual attendance for the whole school year, and receiving their support exclusively from the State treasury, was 126.

The number in actual attendance for school year, paying part tuition was 14.

The number paying entire cost of board and instruction was 10.

The first class named come to the asylum on certificates of county judges that the parents or friends are in such indigent circumstances that they are unable to contribute anything towards the cost of maintenance of the pupil.

The second class is made up of those whose friends are able to contribute something, more or less, towards such annual cost.

The third, of course, are those whose parents or friends are able and willing to defray the entire expense of their education.

In the arithmetic of the institution, two pupils, whose friends pay annually one half the cost of their support, would be reckoned as one pay pupil and one State pupil. And so also in other cases of part pay pupils.

Two pupils, connected with the asylum a year ago, have died; the one, at home, where it had been removed on account of sickness, the other from tuberculous disease, here.

Aside from these cases, there have been no cases of sickness in the institution. The regularity of institution life, even in cases of children of quite feeble organization, seems to secure a degree of exemption from sickness that is quite marked. As in former years, the degree of success in the work of educating the pupils has varied with the classes of pupils sent to the Asylum. Looking at them as a body, no one can doubt that a very decided improvement is visible in their intelligence, in their spirit of obedience, in their habits and in their capacity for work.

Observing them in classes, it must be confessed that there is always one class, constituting perhaps twenty per cent of the whole number, whose improvement is mainly confined to a change in their habits. In a strict construction of our by-laws most of these would never have been admitted, or if admitted, retained only for a brief period of trial. But in the absence of any proper custodial institution they are suffered to remain year after year a serious clog upon the progress of the others. It would seem as if the time had come for a review of the whole subject of the efforts to ameliorate the condition of the idiots of the State.

When this institution was founded, the public provision for their proposed relief was so small compared with their necessities, and in fact the public had so little knowledge of what could or should be done, that the administrators of this provision could only meet the need in a single and the shortest way.

Under other circumstances, and the character of the evil being more fully comprehended, the plans for relief might have adopted a different order in the steps to be taken.

For example in Kentucky, many years ago a law was passed, by which the parents of an idiot, who were in indigent circumstances, could draw from the State treasury a certain amount annually for the support of such idiot ; the district judges certifying to the facts of the case.

The extent to which this provision of the law was applied will be understood by the fact that some \$25,000 was annually drawn from the State treasury for this purpose.

The time came when an institution for the education of idiots was established in Kentucky. Then those of the number already receiving aid from the State were classified, the one class of a teachable age and condition were brought to the new institution to receive a proper training, the other class, including those who were unteachable or too old for instruction, still remained the beneficiaries of the State, under the same conditions as before.

In this State, the course taken was a different one. The first State appropriation was applied to the founding of an educational establishment. The institution thus founded, has pursued its course, attempting to carry out the design of its founders, and it is safe to say with a reasonable degree of success. Each year the great body of the pupils submitted to its care have been rising in the scale of intelligence, self-control and productive capacity. Each year a number, greater or less, but in due proportion to the total number of pupils, have been dismissed, the objects of their stay in the institution having been accomplished.

The fact has been established that a certain proportion of the idiots of this or any other State are capable of a satisfactory degree of education ; an education that is just as valuable to them as an education to any other class in the community. No one will question this who has ever visited an institution designed for such a purpose and properly conducted, or who has studied the features and condition of idiocy. The only question that would arise, the only point upon which there could be a difference of opinion, would be as to where the line should be drawn, between what should practically be considered teachable cases and what unteachable. In other words, where the results of training and instruction, fairly compensate for the trouble and expense involved. The entire class must needs be fed and clothed and made comfortable in every civilized community. A portion of them should have an appropriate education. These points must be conceded. And it may be remarked that after provision has been made for the first demand the second may be met with a very small expenditure of the public money. It is to be remembered that

to arrive at the cost of such appropriate education, it is not fair to compare the present cost of support and instruction in our State asylums for idiots, with the average cost of support of idiots in the pauper establishments of the State, and for two reasons. In the first place, the provision made for the support and comfort of the cases found in the latter establishment is grossly inadequate. The reports of the various commissions appointed by the State at different times to visit these institutions is conclusive upon this point. Generally ill-fed, half-naked and exposed to abuse more or less systematic, such would seem to be the rule rather than the exception of their treatment.

Again, even under these circumstances, it may be said that the cost of maintenance and care of the insane and idiotic far exceeds the average cost of the support of the pauper class generally. A casual observation would confirm this assertion. But beyond this, we have a fact which plainly proves it. It sometimes occurs that individuals of these two classes, belonging to one county, are, for some reason, supported in the poor-house of another county; or individuals whose friends are able to defray the expenses of their support are placed in such institutions. Whenever this occurs, the charge is always above the average cost of support of the general inmates; usually about double.

It has already been mentioned that quite a percentage of cases in this institution, designed as an educational one, are, in a measure, unteachable. The presence of these not only embarrasses the general management, but swells the average cost of taking care of the pupils generally.

This general question of State policy in regard to the proper disposition of the idiots within its borders thus becomes a practical one to those interested in the management of this asylum.

Within two or three years the State has settled upon a policy in reference to the future care of the insane poor. It has now nearly completed the erection of a large building in the central part of the State, at Ovid, where such are to be sent by the county authorities. This building is located on a large farm, where the labor of the patients can be, to some extent, made available in diminishing the cost of their support. The plan of the building is capable of some degree of expansion to meet future necessities, and when this fails of accommodation, it is proposed to erect upon other portions of the farm moderate-priced structures to meet additional wants.

Here, then, in time, will be congregated the insane poor of quite a portion of the State. Under the new and more intelligent management to which they will be submitted, it is expected that the cost of their proper support will be but slightly more than now; and the difference in the degree of comfort afforded them an immense one.

A plan thus admirably devised for the insane may well be copied with reference to the idiots of the State; the present condition of both classes, as a rule, being alike a disgrace to modern civilization. To accomplish so desirable a purpose, only the slightest amount of legislation is necessary. It would consist only of an amendment to the

present law relating to the Ovid asylum, making its provisions inclusive of idiots as well as of insane, and upon the same conditions.

And for the accommodation of the number thus added, a building is already provided, if it can be but devoted to their use. The farm upon which the new asylum has been erected at Ovid is the one upon which the Agricultural College was erected. That building now stands unoccupied. It is a new structure, commodious, and quite well adapted for the purpose proposed. A slight alteration would make it all that could be desired. The same organization that has the oversight of the insane asylum could extend its supervision, medical and otherwise, over the proposed addition.

It would seem as if the mere presentation of the facts would suffice to ensure the necessary legislation.

It must not be supposed that those who are classed as unteachable from any cause (except epilepsy) are beyond the reach of some degree of improvement, under the comparatively favorable circumstances that would be supplied even in the custodial institution recommended; for, judging by the experience at this asylum, in the cases that have been dismissed as incapable of education, even these have, with very few exceptions, been regarded by their friends as having been greatly improved by their residence here—improved in habits, causing much less trouble, more capable of helping themselves, and more easily controlled.

Such provision being made for the unteachable, the present State Asylum for Idiots could be left to follow out strictly the plan of its founders. This, as other kindred institutions, was established and endowed upon the supposition that idiots as a class, if taken at a proper age, and if not afflicted by positively incurable disease or great deformity, (such conditions as would preclude the attempt at instruction, the case of children of ordinary intelligence,) were susceptible of education and improvement.

Moreover, that this education, if wisely planned and judiciously applied, not only commended itself as a proper subject for public charity but as a wise measure of political economy. It was assumed that idiots (using the term in the generic sense, and including all shades of mental condition not susceptible of development under the ordinary circumstances of human culture,) were human beings of imperfect physical organization, to a greater or less degree; that they possessed the germs of all human faculties, not expanding by reason of the physical infirmities or defects of organization; that wherever there existed the germs of intellect, sensibility and will, there was the possibility of culture and growth; that this development was the same in kind, though differing in degree, as the unfolding of the human intellect under the common methods of education; that if the system of education applied were made sufficiently practical, the mental growth and discipline would be accompanied with greater self-control and greater capacity for usefulness. And, furthermore, that the habits, peculiar to idiocy, could be so overcome as to relieve its most disagreeable features. The asylum was described in the first report of the Board of Trustees to the Legislature, "as an establish-

ment for the management and education of young idiots. As an extension of the blessings of education of an appropriate character, to a class of persons of a teachable age (not deaf, mute or blind), whose faculties were not susceptible of development, under the customary condition and facilities of a common education."

Fulfilling this function, the asylum has pursued its course, by educational means and appliances, that have been repeatedly described in its annual reports, to the entire satisfaction of those who have been cognisant of its history. The general results and some special results in individual cases have, from time to time, been set forth in the same manner and have been considered as furnishing sufficient proof of the practicability of the work. That this is not the judgment alone of those specially interested in the care and management of this institution or those who have been its patrons, I may confirm by quoting the language of the Commissioners in Lunacy of Great Britain, in view of the success of similar efforts in that country. These gentlemen write as follows: "The benefits to be derived, even in idiot cases apparently hopeless, from a distinctive system and from persevering endeavors to develop the dormant powers, physical and intellectual, are now so fully established, that any argument upon the subject would be superfluous." (Mar. 31, 1865.)

It remains for me, in concluding this report, only to renew my expression of satisfaction with the efforts of my assistants of every kind in carrying out the purposes of the institution, and to thank the members of the board for their continued expressions of good-will towards myself personally, and their confidence in my immediate management of the affairs of the asylum, from its foundation.

Respectfully submitted,

H. B. WILBUR,

Superintendent.

SYRACUSE, Oct. 7th, 1868.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

ALLEN MUNROE, *Treasurer of New York Asylum for Idiots, in account current with the State of New York, for cash received and expended for the general supplies and the salaries and wages of officers, teachers, attendants and servants of said Asylum, during the year ending September 30th, 1868:*

1867.		DR.	
Oct.	1.	Cash from State Treasurer,.....	\$10,000 00
Dec.	21.	do do	5,000 00
		Clothing account for month February, 1868,	1,975 30
		do do March, do	238 45
March	12.	Cash from State Treasurer,.....	5,000 00
May	15.	do do	4,000 00
June	20.	County treasurer,.....	140 00
	23.	State Treasurer,.....	5,200 00
		Overdraft,	1,249 48
			<hr/> \$32,803 23 <hr/>

1867.		CR.	
Oct.	1.	Overdraft,	\$3,242 59
1868.			
Jan.	1.	By cash paid on warrants for quarter ending December 31, 1868,	8,860 86
April	1.	By cash paid on warrants for quarter ending March 31, 1868,.....	8,423 02
July	1.	By cash paid on warrants for quarter ending June 30, 1868,.....	6,603 96
Sept.	30.	By cash paid on warrants for quarter ending September 30, 1868,.....	5,668 00
			<hr/> \$32,803 23 <hr/>

(Signed)

ALLEN MUNROE.

October, 1868, audited and found correct.

JAMES H. TITUS,

Chairman of Executive Committee.

APPENDIX

Extract from the By-laws of the Asylum.

"The design and objects of the Asylum, as established by the action of the Legislature, are not of a custodial character, but to furnish the means of education to that portion of the youth of the State not provided for in any of its other educational institutions. Those only will therefore be received into the Asylum, who are of a proper school-attending age, and for such periods of time as shall, in the estimation of the Board of Trustees, suffice to impart all the education practicable in each particular case, and in conformity with the regulations hereinafter specified.

Children between the ages of seven and fourteen, who are idiotic, or so deficient in intelligence as to be incapable of being educated at any ordinary school, and who are not epileptic, insane or greatly deformed, may be admitted by the Superintendent, with the advice and consent of the executive committee. Applications in behalf of others shall be referred to the action of the Board of Trustees.

The parents or next friends of those in whose behalf applications are made for admission as pupils, shall make answers in writing to such questions as the Superintendent and committee shall prescribe. They shall, moreover, if of sufficient ability, engage to pay such reasonable sum for the education and support of the pupils, and to furnish them with such proper clothing while in the institution, as shall be stipulated by the Superintendent, and they shall in all cases be bound to receive them back, when required, free of expense to the Asylum. But no idiots shall be received into the Asylum, without there shall have been first lodged with the Superintendent thereof, a request to that effect, under the hand of the person by whose direction he is sent, stating the age and place of nativity, if known, of the idiot, his christian and surname, the town or city, and county in which they severally reside, the ability or otherwise, of the idiot, his parents or guardians, to provide for his support in whole or in part, and if in part only, in what part and the degree of relationship, or other circumstances of connection between him and the person requesting his admission; which statement shall be verified in writing, by the oath of two disinterested persons, residents of the same county with the idiot, acquainted with the facts and circumstances so stated, and certified to be credible by the county judge of the same county. And no idiot shall be received into said asylum unless the county judge of the county liable for his support, shall certify that such idiot is an eligible and proper candidate for admission to said asylum as aforesaid.

The State pupils in the Asylum will be selected in equal numbers, as far as may be, from each judicial district, from those whose parents or guardians are unable to provide for their support therein.

The State pupils will be expected to come to the Asylum provided with a supply of neat and substantial clothing for the first six months, after which period the clothing will be furnished by the Asylum, at the expense of the respective counties of which they are residents, as in the case of the deaf and dumb and the blind asylums of the State.

A bond will be required in all cases, except the case of a State pupil, to insure the removal of the pupil free of expense to the institution.

All pupils will be received upon trial for one month, at the end of which time a report upon the case will be made to the parents or parties sending them.

The education furnished by the institution will include not only the simpler elements of instruction usually taught in common schools, where that is practicable, but will embrace a course of training in the more practical matters of every day life, the cultivation of habits of decency, propriety, self-management and self-reliance, and the development and enlargement of a capacity for useful occupation.

There shall be a vacation during the whole month of August, unless otherwise directed by the board, at which period all pupils must be removed from the Asylum, by the parents or guardians, if required by the Superintendent.

Applications for admission to the Asylum, stating age, sex, general health, and such other particulars as will enable the Trustees to judge of the teachableness of the person for whom application is made, must be directed to the Superintendent, Dr. H. B. Wilbur.

It will be seen by reference to the foregoing, just what the mode of admission is.

Application is first made to the Superintendent of the Asylum, furnishing such particulars of the condition of the person for whom application is made, as will enable the executive committee to decide whether the party is a suitable subject for admission.

If the case come within the purpose of the institution, a blank form of application is at once sent, which when filled up and returned to the Superintendent, furnishes a statement of the name, residence, &c., of the party, and his or her pecuniary condition, or the pecuniary condition of his or her parents, verified by the affidavit of two persons acquainted with the circumstances related in the statement, and confirmed by the certificate of the county judge.

On the return of this circular, if there is a vacancy from the judicial district in which the party resides, permission is at once given for his or her admission.

If no vacancy exists at the time, the parties interested are so notified, and the application is filed—the applicant to receive the benefit of the first vacancy, in turn.

It is provided in the by-laws that each pupil shall be taken on trial. The probationary period named is one month. The practice has been otherwise. The cases rejected on trial have usually been retained a much longer period; at all events, till it was certain that they were not suitable subjects for improvement.

The grounds upon which pupils have been dismissed under this rule hitherto, have been, first: serious ill-health that seemed likely to terminate in a speedy death. In most of the cases included under this head, the wisdom of the decision requiring their removal has been verified by the fact that they died not many months afterwards. Next: confirmed epilepsy. When this disease has been fully developed, the same reasons that suggested the article in the by-laws against the admission of epileptics would require their dismissal.

Again, true dementia, or a loss of mind resulting from organic lesion of the brain, as a consequence of some disease in infancy or childhood.

Again, cases of idiocy conjoined with insanity. In these, the very measures of management and instruction adopted in the case of idiocy, only excite and aggravate the peculiarities presented; and as there is no proper provision in the institution for confinement, seclusion or restraint, their dismissal is rendered unavoidable.

In a few cases only, it could be said that all efforts to educate or radically improve that the asylum afforded, had failed of their purpose.