

**Fourteenth annual report of the New York Asylum for Idiots : transmitted to the Legislature, January 27th, 1865 / New York State Asylum for Idiots.**

**Contributors**

New York State Asylum for Idiots.  
Fenton, Robert E.  
Wilbur, H. B. 1820-1883.  
White, Hamilton.

**Publication/Creation**

Albany : Comstock & Cassidy, 1865.

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/rjtkgvhn>

**License and attribution**

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

FOURTEENTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

NEW YORK ASYLUM

FOR

IDIOTS.

---

TRANSMITTED TO THE LEGISLATURE JANUARY 27<sup>TH</sup>, 1865.

---

ALBANY:  
C. WENDELL, PRINTER.  
1865.

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2018 with funding from  
Wellcome Library

State of New York.  
No. 54.  
IN ASSEMBLY,  
January 27, 1865.  
**TRUSTEES:**

---

JAMES H. TITUS,  
HENRY N. POHLMAN,  
ALLEN MUNROE,  
HIRAM PUTNAM,

FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,  
HAMILTON WHITE,  
LYMAN CLARY,  
SANFORD E. CHURCH.

*State Officers—Ex officio Trustees.*

GOVERNOR FENTON,  
CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW,

THOMAS G. ALVORD,  
LUCIUS G. ROBINSON,  
VICTOR M. RICE.

*Permanent Chairman.*

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

*Secretary.*

ALLEN MUNROE.

*Treasurer.*

HAMILTON WHITE.

*Executive Committee.*

HIRAM PUTNAM,  
ALLEN MUNROE.

JAMES H. TITUS,



OFFICERS:

---

*Superintendent.*

HERVEY B. WILBUR, M. D.

*Matron.*

MISS ALVIRA WOOD.

*Housekeeper.*

MRS. M. E. COOK.

*Teachers.*

MISS S. P. YOUNG,      MISS FANNY BROWN.  
MISS MARY F. WALTON,      MISS CHRISTINA ERLUND,  
MISS ELIZA PARKER.

*Steward.*

R. FRISSELLE.

# State of New York.

No. 54.

## IN ASSEMBLY,

January 27, 1865.

### FOURTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

*To the Legislature of the State of New York :*

In compliance with the act establishing the New York Asylum for Idiots, the subscribers, Trustees of the institution, respectfully submit this their

### FOURTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT.

The total cash receipts for the fiscal year, commencing October 1st, 1863, and ending September 30th, 1864, as stated in the Treasurer's Report, herewith annexed, are as follows, viz :

#### RECEIPTS.

From the State Treasury, annual appropriation .....	\$18,000 00
From counties, for clothing State pupils .....	1,074 74
From friends of pay-pupils for board and clothing, ..	3,813 67
From sale of fruit, and other farm products .....	678 06
Balance in bank, October 1st, 1863, .....	1,709 45
Temporary loan .....	1,000 00

\$26,275 92

#### EXPENDITURES.

Bills audited by executive committee for quarter ending Dec'r 31, 1863 .....	\$6,504 03
Bills audited by executive committee for quarter ending March 31, 1864 .....	3,982 61
Bills audited by executive committee for quarter ending June 30, 1864 .....	6,813 31
Bills audited by executive committee for quarter ending September 30, 1864 .....	8,784 28
Leaving balance in bank .....	192 19

\$26,276 42



The actual expenses of the institution for the same period, as obtained from the diary of the steward, are as follows :

Provisions and supplies of all kinds .....	\$8,064 45
Salaries of officers and teachers .....	4,412 50
Wages of attendants and servants .....	4,257 11
Gas .....	823 57
Rent of farm land .....	235 00
Fuel .....	1,856 23
Farm, garden, stable and stock .....	902 54
Furniture and furnishing articles .....	1,702 64
Repairs, improvements and additions .....	1,720 55
School books, stationery and apparatus .....	92 15
Printing .....	11 50
Postage .....	27 06
Freight and express .....	25 21
Sending children home .....	81 95
Traveling expenses of Trustees and Superintendent .....	52 96
Clothing for children .....	1,334 63
Miscellaneous bills, paid by steward .....	362 04
	<hr/>
	\$25,962 09
	<hr/>

*Outstanding Debts, October 1, 1864.*

Sundry bills for provisions .....	\$1,523 26
do clothing .....	474 96
do repairs .....	183 19
do farm .....	24 49
do gas .....	204 00
Wages for September .....	256 00
Salaries for quarter ending September 30, 1864 .....	1,190 00
Loan of savings bank .....	1,500 00
Loan of Ham'l White's bank .....	1,000 00
	<hr/>
	\$6,355 90
	<hr/>

*Cash Assets, October 1, 1864.*

Due from counties for clothing .....	\$250 00
do individuals for clothing .....	160 00
do pay-pupils, board and tuition .....	2,041 14
Balance in bank .....	191 69
	<hr/>
	2,642 83
Six cases of tobacco (estimated) .....	500 00
	<hr/>
	\$3,142 83
	<hr/>



Showing a balance of indebtedness on the first day of October, 1864, of \$3,213 07.

There is, however, on hand farm and garden supplies estimated by the steward at .....	1,875 80
And household supplies and clothing .....	877 00
	<hr/>
	\$2,752 80

Which will be available towards the present year's expenses.

The increased prices of all items for subsistence and supplies swells the expenses of the Institution for the last fiscal year, over those of the previous year, as follows :

Total expenses for such purposes in the year ending	
October 1, 1864, was .....	\$25,962 09
Total expenses for such purposes in the year ending	
October 1, 1863, was .....	20,657 10
	<hr/>
Making in the aggregate an increase of .....	\$5,304 99
	<hr/> <hr/>

The salaries of officers and teachers have not been raised ; the wages of attendants and servants have been increased	\$389 66
The cost of flour and meal exceeded that of last year	178 66
do fresh meat do	622 01
do butter do	265 52
do sugar do	324 90
do molasses and syrup do	271 75
do paints, oils, &c. do	170 68
do gas do	124 22
do fuel, (in 1863, \$872 20, in 1864 \$1,856 23) exceeded that of last year .....	984 03
Furniture, furnishing articles, household linen, &c. (in 1863 \$917 23, in 1864 \$1,702.64) over last year...	785 41
	<hr/>
	\$4,116 84
Repairs and improvements .....	\$524 54
On all other items in aggregate .....	663 61
	<hr/>
	1,188 15
	<hr/>
	\$5,304 99
	<hr/> <hr/>

From this it appears that the indebtedness of the institution over cash assets, as shown above, is altogether the result of enhanced prices, which would be still larger, but for the fact that the income of the year exceeded that of the previous years about \$1,000, owing to an increase in the rates charged in the case of pay-pupils.



The appropriation for the present fiscal year, at the extreme rates now ruling for every thing in the form of household supplies, will not suffice to meet the current expenses of the year ; it therefore becomes necessary, not only that the Legislature should provide for the existing debt, (which would not have occurred if the extra appropriation of \$3,000 asked for in the last report had been made by the Legislature of last winter,) but also to meet the probable excess of expenditure over the appropriation for the present fiscal year ; and this will require \$6,000.

The number of State pupils for the past school year has been 124 ; of pay pupils 23, making a total of 147 ; the average attendance having been 139. For other particulars in relation to the domestic affairs of the institution, reference is made to the superintendent's report to the Board, hereunto annexed.

During the last year the trustees, in the death of the honorable George H. Middleton, have lost one of their associates who was always efficient in duty, and esteemed in personal intercourse. A resolution relative to the sad event, adopted by the board, will be found in the appendix to this report. The Hon. S. E. Church was appointed by the Governor and Senate to fill the vacancy occasioned by his death.

A special committee has been appointed by the board to examine into the history and operation of the Asylum from its commencement, and to report concerning the same at the next annual meeting of the Board. A copy of the resolution will be found in the appendix, from which the Legislature will learn the design of such special examination.

The Trustees, as in all former reports, have the satisfaction of speaking in praise of the superintendent and his subordinates for their faithful care of the domestic concerns and operations of the Asylum.

R. E. FENTON,  
T. G. ALVORD,  
V. M. RICE,  
JAMES H. TITUS,  
HENRY N. POHLMAN,

FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,  
ALLEN MUNROE,  
HIRAM PUTNAM,  
HAMILTON WHITE,  
LYMAN CLARY.



## REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

*To the Trustees of the New York Asylum for Idiots.*

Gentlemen :—The Fourteenth Annual Report of the affairs of the institution of which I have the immediate charge, is herewith respectfully submitted.

As this report ordinarily constitutes a part of your own report to the Legislature, I present a brief summary of the statistics of the institution.

The total number of pupils on our list the past year was 147. There were but few changes during the year, so that reducing the actual aggregate periods of residence of these 147 to the school year, the average attendance was a little less than 140. Of this 147, 124 were State pupils, and 23 were paying pupils.

The average per capita cost of board and instruction was some thirty dollars more than in previous years, or about \$180. This will necessarily be increased, even during the fiscal year upon which we have just entered. At the present cost of supplies, I dare not estimate it at less than \$200 a year for each pupil. The expense of last year would have been more but for the favorable results of our farm and garden account. Our crops this year have fallen off somewhat from the effects of the severe drought of the summer.

Though but few cases of sickness have occurred in the family during the year past, we have lost three of our number by death. Those thus released were infirm of body and worn out with organic disease. Thus one had never walked, and hardly held his head erect. Another had been subject to periods of severe pain in the head, and other symptoms of organic disease in the brain, terminating at last in congestion and death. The third had been a confirmed epileptic of the worst form for years. Three other pupils, dismissed on account of ill health, have died since leaving the Asylum. Ten others were dismissed for various causes. Two were insane, two incurable, and the remainder discharged, much



benefitted by our course of training, after the customary period of residence in the institution.

As it is upon the subject of admissions and dismissals that most of our correspondence occurs, it may be well here to state the policy of the institution in regard to them.

It has been mentioned in most of the previous reports that the asylum was founded for educational purposes. At the outset it assumed a position among the educational institutions of the State. The age of admission therefore was restricted by its by-laws to what was supposed to be the most teachable age in the persons to be submitted to its care and management. While there was no sufficient experience to determine the exact term that pupils should be retained, it was assumed for the time being that it should correspond with that which ruled in the other State establishments of an analogous character. Necessarily developing later than ordinary children, as such pupils do, and with a much more moderate rate of progress when the work has been begun, education in the case of subjects of special instruction, will properly begin later and be protracted over a longer period. It may be added, that this general statement, which will be readily accepted on the mere presentation, is sustained by physiological considerations equally obvious when examined.

From the nature of the case it not unfrequently happens that idiocy is connected with more or less of positive disease, rendering the person entirely unfitted to receive instruction. It is also not uncommonly accompanied with confirmed epilepsy, in which case, the presumption will be that both the convulsions and the mental deficiency have a common origin, and that, usually, in some organic disease not to be reached by any treatment or management. In some other instances the idiocy is connected with so great a degree of bodily deformity as to prevent the use of the necessary and appropriate means of training and instruction. Clearly then, all cases of idiocy should not necessarily be received into an educational institution for idiots. In view of these circumstances, the following restrictions as to reception were incorporated into our by-laws :

“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 counsel of the Executive Committee. Applications in behalf of others shall be referred to the action of the Board of Trustees."

Beyond these, no extent or degree of idiocy was designed to prevent any idiot child from having the opportunity of testing the efficacy of the means of training and instruction furnished by the Asylum.

Another point should be noticed here. Idiocy, or that general mental condition which is commonly understood by that term, depends upon a defect or infirmity of some portion or the whole of the general nervous system, just as blindness or deafness depend upon some affection of the special nerves of sight or hearing. And just as complete and hopeless blindness and deafness will result when these special nerves are affected to a certain extent, so is it true, that in certain conditions of the central nervous masses, the brain or spinal cord, there will result a degree of idiocy or a form of idiocy that, so far as any marked or permanent results are concerned, may be considered hopeless. In other words, the organic defect and the diseased condition cannot be remedied, and therefore the resulting mental deficiency cannot be obviated. The peculiar conditions however upon which the idiocy is based are so beyond the reach of one's observation, are oftentimes so subtle in their character and pathological symptoms, that they can only be inferred, (scarcely said to be proved) by a failure after a fair trial of the most approved means to obviate them.

On this account it was provided in our by-laws that each pupil should be taken on trial. The probationary period named was one month. The practice has been otherwise. We have in almost every instance retained, even those cases finally rejected as incurable, at least six months, and commonly for a year.

In looking over the list of pupils dismissed, after a trial, I find the following as among the more frequent causes which prompted their dismissal: Serious ill health, that seemed likely to terminate in an early 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. I have noticed the fact that it was the intent of our by-laws to preclude the admission of these cases.



Still, they have not infrequently crept in. Sometimes this has occurred through actual misrepresentation of parties applying, but more commonly in cases where there had been infantile convulsions, which were supposed by the friends to be outgrown, or, gradually growing more infrequent, their complete disappearance at the age of puberty was hoped for. These hopes and expectations have been disappointed, and the cases have terminated in confirmed epilepsy. In a few instances epilepsy has supervened in children who had previously had no convulsive symptoms. When the disease has been fully developed, of course, the same reasons that suggested the article in the by-laws against the admission of epileptics, would require their dismissal.

In another class of pupils we have had *dementia* proper, or a loss of mind resulting from organic lesion of the brain, resulting in the course of some of the diseases of infancy. These prove unreachable, as might be expected, and are dismissed. Of similar cases occurring among adults, Esquirol, after forty years experience, remarked of the various means of treatment, that had been tried: "all these measures have unhappily resulted in very rare and often ephemeral success."

In a few cases, with the idiocy, insanity has been conjoined. In these, the very measures of management and instruction adopted in the case of idiocy, only seem to excite and to aggravate the peculiarities presented; and, as we have no proper provisions for confinement, seclusion or restraint, their dismissal is rendered unavoidable. In other cases, we could only say that our efforts to educate have failed, we know not why. It should be mentioned, however, that in almost every instance where dismissal has occurred the friends have insisted that there has been positive improvement as the result of our labors.

The range of mental deficiency actually admitted into the asylum, can hardly be understood, except by those who have been familiar with its history. The same may be said of the condition of the pupils present at any given period.

Out of the one hundred and forty pupils there are usually some twenty or thirty in what may be called the nursery department. Here they receive physical training; here they receive peculiar management to establish habits of cleanliness, order and obedience, and if need be, medical treatment of an alterative character. Here they are exposed to educational influences of a simple character. The remainder, a large proportion, are pupils proper.



They have a place in the school rooms of the Asylum, a certain number of hours each day, and receive positive instruction at the hands of well educated and trained teachers. The methods of instruction are necessarily somewhat different from those adopted in ordinary schools ; for these have been tried and failed in a few of the most promising cases sent to the Asylum.

In the average mental condition of our pupils, those early exercises of the mind which should be intuitive in the learner, have to be called out by the active agency of the teacher. The prevailing sign and symptom of their deficiency is the want of will. The attention is not fixed on any object long enough to have distinct sensations, clear perceptions or definite ideas. And so the function of the teacher, here more than elsewhere, embraces the study and the use of the proper incentives and motives to arouse and guide the action of the will.

In all these respects it is evident that the teacher of idiots must in his ministrations, go below the ordinary range of the work of instruction ; and to do this well, new principles are not needed—only new devices.

But the customary limits of our annual report would not suffice to describe in detail the various educational means and appliances used ; they are such as experience here and elsewhere have commended to our use. It should be added, to present the leading feature of the whole system, that these are all subordinated to the ultimate aim of the institution, which is to give the pupils a capacity, in some degree, for useful occupation. And just as fast as they reach a working age, the effort is made to apply the habits of observation and order, of mental activity and continuous application, created in the school room, to some form of positive industrial occupation.

The degree of success we have attained in this direction, your own observation for the last few years of what our boys and girls have accomplished on the farm, in the garden and in various household occupations, will furnish some proof.

In short, the Asylum aims to furnish an education designed to meet the particular wants of the class included under the term idiots, in its widest signification. If it fails in this, it is not because as a class they are not teachable ; it is not because they have no educational needs ; it is not because society has been regardless of their claim—whether considered as one of obligation or of charity—but because sufficient wisdom, and tact, and zeal



and patience has not been brought to the work. The experience of this Asylum has certainly furnished abundant evidence to prove them teachable ; to prove that education contributes to their comfort and happiness, to the relief of their friends and to the lessening of the cost of their future support, whether by individuals or at the public charge. The State of New York, by years of legislation, has placed this Asylum on the same footing with the institutions for the instruction of the blind and deaf mutes. They are all now regarded as supplementary to the common school system of the State, so that no class of its children are now overlooked in the public provision for education.

As the institution for the education of idiots was the last to claim and to receive public endowment in this State, as in other States, a word or two may be said to show that it has not failed in its mission. It has from the outset been opened freely to the visits and inspection of the friends of the pupils and the public generally. It has received, so far as I am aware, the almost universal approval of those who have entrusted children to its care. When no radical improvement has been accomplished, in any cases, and the officers have been compelled to express their disappointment at the result, even then they have been satisfied with the relief it afforded as a place of safe custody ; for it is these hopeless cases, that involve an amount of care and trouble at home, that can be estimated only by those who have felt it. Though but a few years in operation, it has sent out from time to time pupils who, under intelligent direction, have proved industrious, obedient and faithful. Examples of this kind have occasionally been recorded in our annual reports. It has received the general approbation, sympathy and good will of the public, who have known any thing of its operations.

The only objection that has been ever urged against these State educational establishments for the unfortunate, has come from a very few individuals, and usually with rather a faint breath ; and that is the expense of their maintenance. How much force there is in this will appear from the following statement. In looking up some statistics in relation to the State charitable institutions, I discovered to my own surprise, facts of this character :

Taking the largest number ever supported at the State's expense, at any one time, in all the institutions referred to combined, the proportion to the whole population is only one to some five thousand three hundred. The largest sum paid for the annual support



of the three institutions, compared with the wealth of New York is so small, that the farmer who is worth ten thousand dollars is taxed annually the moderate sum of forty cents. This is certainly not a very severe tribute to the philanthropic tendencies of present civilization.

It needs to be added, for the information of the public, that this is not a custodial institution. The time eventually comes to all the pupils when they must be returned to their natural or legal guardians. They have received all the education of which they are susceptible; or the customary term of residence has expired. Though the mental development here obtained is lasting in its character, and though the habits here established are in their influence permanent, still the future comfort and usefulness of the pupils will depend much upon the circumstances by which they may be surrounded. They will still be peculiar, and will need, as a rule, kind and intelligent direction and control. It may be said of any system of education, however well devised, that it will not insure one against all the untoward circumstances that may be met with, yet its tendency is to increase the power of adaptation of the individual to his surroundings.

Viewed however, as every idiot must be, whatever the degree of his deficiency, as the subject of unusual care and anxiety, the effect of a proper system of training must be, in all cases, to reduce that care, to diminish the amount of trouble and expense involved in his future support and management, and to relieve, in some measure, the anxiety felt.

The time is not far distant, when this Asylum has been a little longer in operation, when the permanent results in the case of those who have been sent out after a full term of instruction, may be embodied in its annual report; till then, the history of single cases may not inappropriately be given to satisfy a public curiosity. Allusion has been made, in a former report, to one of our pupils, then serving in the army. The case merits still further notice.

L. S., a boy of nine years old, was admitted to the Asylum some ten years since. He came from one of the orphan asylums of the State, where efforts to educate him had been faithfully but unsuccessfully tried. He was a stout and healthy boy, but very slow in his motions. He spoke very imperfectly. Those who had attempted to teach him previously, complained that he learned slowly and forgot rapidly. He was, in the main, good tempered,



but at times exceedingly obstinate and willful, and when so quite desperate. Under the influence to which he was exposed here he gradually learned to speak, to read and write very well. As he developed in size and strength he acquired habits of industry, and such a capacity for labor that he not only was very useful in our ordinary farming operations, but in the nicer operations connected with the garden and orchard. The last year before he left the Asylum, he took almost the sole care of the grape vines on the place. In fact, by the officers of the institution, the results of education in his case were regarded with the utmost satisfaction. He had been in the Asylum the usual period of continuance, and the question arose as to what disposition should be made of him. I was not acquainted with his history prior to his entrance to the orphan asylum. No relatives had manifested interest enough in him to make inquiries for him except his step-mother; and those inquiries were directed mainly to the point whether he could not be placed somewhere where he might contribute to her support. A little more than two years ago, he solved the question for himself by enlisting as a soldier. By my advice he allotted the greater portion of his pay, to be held in trust for him till the expiration of his term of service, and then left for the field.

From time to time I heard, through his officers, that he proved to be a brave and faithful soldier. By his own letters to different members of the family, we were enabled to follow him; escaping unhurt through many skirmishes, as also through the thickest of the fight at Gettysburgh. In that engagement, having been accidentally separated, on the previous day, from his own regiment, he fell in with another regiment, from Onondaga county, and fought with them with a bravery that commanded the approval of his officers. After a period of guard duty at Sandusky, he joined the army of the Potomac, and was wounded severely in the battle of the Wilderness. I have been told that he actually ran away from the hospital to join his comrades in the army of the James.

He was at last transferred to the Shenandoah valley, and was fatally wounded at Fisher's Hill. Through some delay in the transmission, a letter from him saying that he was lying in a hospital, severely wounded and feeling quite friendless, was received only a day or two before the news of his death came. He now sleeps at Winchester. I have in my possession a little package, sealed with adhesive plaster, which contains the last money he re-



ceived from the paymaster, a day or two before his death. It will be devoted to erecting a stone to his memory, in our city cemetery.

While I was making inquiries as to the whereabouts of his step-brother, in whom he felt some interest, and within a short time after his death, in order that I might make over to him the money accumulated in my trust, during his term of service, I was told that three men wished to see me at the door. I found there three persons who, after a little hesitation, announced themselves as the brother and brothers-in-law of my deceased pupil. On inquiry I found that these parties, who had so little interest in their brother that they confessed not to have known where he was when living, had accidentally heard of his death. As this fact was coupled with another, namely, that there was a little money belonging to him somewhere, they now appeared from a remote point in an adjoining county to claim this, as his heirs at law. Their relationship was fully established, and they divided the inheritance. I regret to say, for the credit of our common school system, that when these relatives came to sign their names to the necessary legal documents attending the transfer, both brother and sister signed them with "their marks."

The Asylum has now been thirteen years in existence. The first four years it grew up under the immediate observation of the Legislature. It grew rapidly, for no new State policy was inaugurated in its establishment. It was only an extension of well established principles of legislation. Since its transfer to Syracuse, it has quietly fulfilled its mission, without embarrassments of any kind. The Legislature has cheerfully appropriated annually the necessary means for its support. The system gradually introduced into its management, has operated to reduce the labor and care of all connected with it. In short, it has been uniformly prosperous.

I may properly allude in this connection to what has been done elsewhere for the same object. At South Boston, in Massachusetts, a State school has been in operation for sixteen years. A private institution at Barre, in the same State, has been equally long in operation.

In Connecticut an asylum, based upon an experimental school, some three years in operation, is now well established, in a new building, expressly constructed for the purpose, and dedicated during the last year.



At Media, near Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania school for imbeciles occupies a fine edifice, and now numbers over one hundred and fifty pupils.

An institution at Columbus, Ohio, after several years' experience in buildings leased for the purpose, is now firmly established by an act of legislation, last winter, that provided for a new and commodious structure for its use.

The same is true in Kentucky. The history of the new charity there is quite interesting from the circumstances attending it. For years before it was known that idiots could be benefitted by education, that State was the only one to provide directly from the State treasury for the support of the idiots within its borders. The sum annually appropriated, for their support alone, at last, actually reached a sum exceeding twenty thousand dollars. When the attention of its legislators was called to the fact that they could be instructed; the inference was readily drawn that it was more in accordance with the spirit of a wise and benevolent legislation, and in fact a more economical application of the State's bounty, to educate in habits of industry those who were teachable, rather than merely to provide for their support in ignorance and idleness. They acted in accordance with these views and established an institution. The original legislation contemplated the purchase of grounds and the erection of buildings for the use of the asylum, and a partial appropriation was made for that purpose, to be followed by additional grants as they should be needed. The land was obtained, the buildings commenced and partly occupied. But the outbreak of the civil war almost crushed the hopes of the friends of the new charity, both there and in the neighboring State of Ohio. Still, the work has gone steadily forward; the means have been furnished and the plans executed, though the State has been almost continually the battle ground of the contending armies. The very grounds of the institution have been alternately occupied by the belligerents, and one superintendent has been removed, in part, because of dubious loyalty.

It may be said of the loyal States generally, that all through the civil war, though involved in unusual expenditures to an extent that has taxed their credit to the utmost, and with the national tax gatherer at every man's door; though contributing generously to the urgent calls for aid growing directly out of the war, and with new fields for charitable effort opening with every advance of the national armies, they have not in a single instance



lost sight of their benevolent institutions at home, but have even made such additional provisions as the peculiar state of the currency have made necessary.

In ordinary circumstances it would hardly be proper to say any thing that should look like disparaging the labors of European philanthropy, but in connection with the facts just mentioned and the language of commiseration at our semi-barbarism that comes to our ears from the other side of the water, one can hardly fail to compare the position of these institutions here and in Great Britain. There no state provision has been made for the education of the unfortunate classes. Whatever has been done in the direction named, has been done by the donations of benevolent individuals. Society, as such, recognizes no obligation to take care of those unable to care for themselves by reason of loss of their natural senses—except to the extent of measures of self-protection, by the confinement of those not safe to run at large; and what is otherwise done, as charity, is so hampered by conditions to minister to the vanity of the donors, is so encumbered by a machinery of life-directorships, published subscription lists, begging sermons and annual dinners, that it has become a question in the minds of thoughtful Englishmen whether the British charities, in the aggregate, are not a curse rather than a blessing to the people.

In this country it is far otherwise. We have governments emanating from the people, to subserve the interests of all the people. And here the principle is acknowledged as fundamental that society owes appropriate care and education to its unfortunates, and that every citizen, as a constituent member of society, has a share in the general obligation.

In the management of an institution like ours almost everything depends upon the intelligence, fitness and fidelity of those who quietly perform its daily duties. I can truly repeat this year what I have been able to say in former years, that the various duties of my associates and subordinates have been well performed.

H. B. WILBUR,  
*Superintendent.*

SYRACUSE, *October 25, 1864.*



## TREASURER'S ACCOUNT.

HAMILTON WHITE, *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, 1864.*

1863.	DR.		
October 1.	To balance in treasury	-----	\$1,709 45
3.	To cash from State Treasurer	-----	4,500 00
Nov'r 29.	do do	-----	4,500 00
1864.			
March 12.	do do	-----	4,500 00
June 9.	do do	-----	4,500 00
September	To cash from various parties for board, instruction and clothing of pay-pupils	-----	3,813 67
	To cash from counties for clothing State pupils	-----	1,074 74
	To cash for sale of various articles	-----	678 06
	To cash from temporary loan	-----	1,000 00
			<u>\$26,275 92</u>

1864.	CR.		
January 1.	By cash paid on bills audited by executive committee for quarter ending Dec. 31, 1863	-----	\$6,504 03
April 1.	By cash paid on bills audited by executive committee for quarter ending March 31, 1864	-----	3,982 61
July 1.	By cash paid on bills audited by executive committee for quarter ending June 30, 1864	-----	6,813 31
Sept'r 30.	By cash paid on bills audited by executive committee for quarter ending September 30, 1864	-----	8,783 78
	By balance	-----	192 19
			<u>\$26,275 92</u>

(Signed)

HAMILTON WHITE.



## APPENDIX A.

*Extract from Minutes of the annual meeting of the Board,  
October 26, 1864.*

On motion of Mr. TITUS, it was

*Resolved*, That a special committee of three, acting in consultation with the Superintendent, be appointed to examine this institution, in all the details of its operations, giving facts and statistics in connection therewith; to investigate the results of its past efforts, and to consider the necessity of other and increased provision for the large number of idiots known to be in all parts of the State, for whom no public provision has been made; and that the committee report at the next annual meeting of this Board.

Messrs. TITUS, POHLMAN and CLARY were appointed as such committee.

On motion of Mr. PUTMAN it was

*Resolved*, Whereas, since the last meeting of this Board, death has removed one of our number, the Hon. GEO. H. MIDDLETON, one who has rendered faithful and important service to the institution, and has ever since his connection with it shown a deep interest in its success and prosperity, therefore,

*Resolved*, That this Board do make this public acknowledgment of their appreciation of his eminent fitness for the office of trustee, and the marked ability and cordial sympathy which he brought to the performance of his official duties; and, that this Board do further take this opportunity of expressing their deep sympathy with the family of the deceased in this, their great affliction.

*Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be transmitted to the widow of the deceased, by the Chairman of this Board, and also inserted in the Annual Report of the Trustees to the Legislature.



## APPENDIX B.

*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 relation-



ship, or other circumstance 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.



