

Twenty-first annual report of the Trustees of the New York Asylum for Idiots of the State of New York : transmitted to the Legislature January 16, 1872 / New York State Asylum for Idiots.

Contributors

New York State Asylum for Idiots.

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TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

TRUSTEES

OF THE

New York Asylum for Idiots

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK.

TRANSMITTED TO THE LEGISLATURE JANUARY 16, 1872.

ALBANY:

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1872.

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STATE OF NEW YORK,
No. 12
IN SENATE,
JANUARY 18, 1890.
TRUSTEES.

JAMES H. TITUS,	FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,	LYMAN CLARY,
ALLEN MUNROE,	E. W. LEAVENWORTH,
GEORGE F. COMSTOCK,	LAKE I. TEFT.

STATE OFFICERS — EX OFFICIO TRUSTEES.

JOHN T. HOFFMAN, *Governor.*
ALLEN C. BEACH, *Lieutenant-Governor.*
G. HILTON SCRIBNER, *Secretary of State.*
NELSON K. HOPKINS, *Comptroller.*
A. B. WEAVER, *Supt. of Public Instruction.*

PERMANENT CHAIRMAN.

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

SECRETARY AND TREASURER.

ALLEN MUNROE.

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LYMAN CLARY.	

OFFICERS.

SUPERINTENDENT.

HERVEY B. WILBUR, M. D.

MATRON.

MISS ALVIRA WOOD.

HOUSEKEEPER.

MRS. SUSAN E. LOESCHER.

TEACHERS.

MISS S. P. YOUNG,

MRS. M. E. COOK,

MISS E. PETHERAM,

MISS M. AMIDON,

MISS E. M. AMES,

MISS H. M. FOSTER.

STEWARD.

MR. WILLIAM H. WOOD.

STATE OF NEW YORK.

No. 15.

IN ASSEMBLY,

January 16, 1872.

TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

TRUSTEES OF THE NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

To the Legislature of the State of New York:

Agreeably to the provisions of the act establishing this institution, the undersigned, trustees, respectfully submit this their twenty-first annual report.

The total cash receipts for the year ending September 30th, 1871, as will be seen by the treasurer's report, herewith annexed, were as follows:

Cash from State treasurer.....	\$25,000 00
County treasurers, for clothing State pupils.....	2,451 65
Cash from individuals, for instruction and clothing, etc., pay pupils	4,850 80
Cash from superintendent, on contingent account.....	20 34
Overdraft at bank, September 30th, 1871.....	1,795 70
Error	2 36
	<hr/>
	\$34,120 85

The expenditures for the same period were as follows:

They are classified under sixty different heads on the books of the asylum, but are here condensed for convenience of comparison with former reports.

Provisions and supplies of all kinds	\$10,452 65
Fuel	696 51
Gas	809 20
Furnishing articles and furniture	2,206 71
Farm, garden and stable	1,478 44
Repairs, improvements and additions	2,463 15
Drugs and medicine	146 98
School books, apparatus, stationery and printing	278 07
Salaries of officers and teachers	5,974 00
Wages of attendants, servants and farm labor	5,224 09
Clothing	2,435 46
Freight, express and telegrams	112 84
Postage	61 78
Interest on loans	54 58
Traveling expenses of trustees	95 13
Traveling expenses of superintendent	87 66
Sending children home (refunded)	46 76
Miscellaneous expenses	28 24
Overdraft at bank, October 1st, 1870	1,468 70
	<hr/>
	\$34,120 95

From the above statement it will be seen that there was an overdraft at the bank, October 1st, 1871	\$1,795 70
There were also due at that date bills of various kinds, amounting to	2,326 29
	<hr/>
	\$4,121 99

CASH ASSETS OF ASYLUM, OCTOBER 1st, 1871.

Due from individuals for board, instruction and clothing	\$2,019 93
From counties and individuals for clothing	80 00
	<hr/>
	\$2,099 93
Other assets of various kinds, on hand, and available for present year's support	2,556 00
	<hr/>
Total assets	\$4,655 93

The actual expenses for the year, deducting the clothing bills, amounted to \$30,216.79.

Dividing this by 145, the number of pupils, we have an annual average cost of \$208.39 for each pupil.

In the last annual report of this board to the Legislature, application was made for a moderate appropriation to increase the then existing accommodations of the asylum. This application was favorably acted upon, and the sum of \$30,000 was granted.

The expectations of the board as to what could be done with the sum named were thus expressed. By the expenditure of this amount (\$30,000), accommodations could be provided for eighty additional pupils. "A part of the sum would be expended in enlarging one of the buildings in the rear of the main building. The remainder would be applied either in adding a wing to the principal building or in erecting a new building of moderate size, at a short distance from it. In any event, these additions would be built in the most inexpensive manner.

"The entire State appropriations, for building purposes, to the asylum, to date, have been \$86,000. Adding the proposed \$30,000, and it will make a construction account of \$116,000, for the accommodation of two hundred and twenty pupils, or, at the rate of \$527 for each inmate. This would be an outlay scarcely exceeding half that of any similar institution in the State."

Owing to delay in procuring suitable plans of building, only the first part of the proposed additions was made. The gymnasium was altered and enlarged, and a new school-room added.

The new rooms are large, well ventilated, and heated by steam in the most approved manner. Convenient dining-rooms and bath-rooms have been furnished and supplied with all the proper appliances.

Thirty-six beds have thus been added to the accommodations of the asylum. The total cost of these additions, including all necessary furniture for such an additional number of pupils, has been but \$11,500.

With the remaining \$18,500 of the appropriation, a new building, attached by a corridor to the north wing of the present building, can be constructed, that will provide for the remainder of the additional number suggested in the last report.

After this is done, the probable present wants of the State in the way of a strictly educational institution will have been met. When in the growth of the State, or from a more extended knowledge of the practical benefit it confers upon pupils, or from a greater readiness on the part of parents to commit their unfortunate children to a State institution, then the question as to the best method of enlarging the State provision for such a class can be intelligently met.

This much may now be said in view of the experience of the New York Asylum for Idiots for a period of more than twenty years. The charity is obviously not only a timely but a practical one. With

every increase of its means of accommodation there has flowed into it, from all portions of the State, a number equal to its new capacity. There is abundant record in its files of correspondence, from parents or parties interested, of the measure of success that has attended the work it was founded to do; and the actual cost, whether in the way of building and appliances or in the matter of current annual expenses, has been entirely within the expectations of its original projectors. The relative cost, as compared with other State institutions, in both these respects, may be seen by an examination of the table in the last report of the Board of State Charities.

When the increased accommodations provided by the recent State appropriation shall be completed, that is, by the commencement of the next school year of the asylum, September 1st, 1872, the annual current expenses of the institution will be proportionately increased. The board would, therefore, ask of the Legislature that the annual appropriation be raised from \$25,000 to \$32,000. This will enable them to maintain and educate 160 pupils, instead of 120, the number now provided for.

Other details as to the affairs of the asylum will be found in the report of the superintendent, which is herewith annexed.

JAMES W. TITUS.

FRANKLIN TOWNSEND.

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

LAKE I. TEFFT.

ALLEN MUNROE.

LYMAN CLARY.

E. W. LEAVENWORTH.

GEORGE F. COMSTOCK.

JOHN T. HOFFMAN,

Governor.

NELSON K. HOPKINS,

Comptroller.

ABRAM B. WEAVER,

Superintendent of Public Instruction.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

To the Trustees of the New York Asylum for Idiots:

GENTLEMEN.—The twenty-first annual report of my administration of the affairs of this institution is herewith respectfully submitted.

I first present a summary of the statistics of the asylum for the past school year, ending September 1st, 1871.

The whole number of pupils connected with the asylum during that period was 149. The average attendance was 145. The number in actual attendance for school year, and receiving their support exclusively from the State treasury, was 116. The number paying part tuition was 11. The number paying entire cost of board and maintenance was 18. The actual cost for board and instruction of each pupil, on the average, was \$208.39. This estimate includes expenditures of all kinds, annual repairs to buildings, and renewals and wear of furniture. During this period there was but one death among the pupils. This was a case of tubercular consumption, following whooping-cough. This was almost the only case of sickness of any severity during the entire year.

There are of course, among so large a number of exceptional children, more or less occasions for the application of an alterative and tonic treatment, and of minor surgical practice. The diet and the regimen has to be planned with reference to a general constitutional infirmity on the part of the pupils. But, with such precautions, a very marked exemption from serious sickness has been the rule from the very commencement.

Our present number of pupils is 153. With the increased capacity of the institution, this number will soon be increased to 170. The only drawback to the satisfaction of the officers in the performance of their duties lies in the fact that there is a gradual accumulation of custodial cases, that are out of place in an educational institution. These interfere somewhat with the legitimate purpose for which the asylum was founded.

This occurs for several reasons or happens in several ways, that may be summed up in this general statement. More or less of the

number of pupils admitted have no actual homes or no friends who have the ability or disposition to care for them properly after a due residence at the asylum.

In a circular lately received at the asylum from the educational bureau at Washington, this inquiry, among others, is made of the superintendent: "How many pupils have been dismissed cured?" This circumstance is mentioned to correct an error that prevails to a certain extent, even with those who understand that this is an institution for the training and teaching of idiots, and not a place of custody or home for life for those admitted here.

The point to be remembered by all interested in this institution, whether those engaged in the work itself, the friends of the pupils, or the public at large, is that the education afforded and the results of training are always relative to the condition of the pupils when admitted. The word condition here is meant to cover all the state of body and mind, all the features and habits that distinguish any pupil so admitted from an average child of the same age, and from others who bear a general and class resemblance to it. The term *cured*, therefore, will not apply to any who are dismissed from the asylum.

In former reports it has been shown that the range of mental condition of pupils in an asylum like ours is a very wide one. The underlying physical defect or infirmity is deep-seated, organic and permanent. There is lesion of nervous centers, thickening of membranes, effusions, or other deposits, beyond the reach of remedy. On the other hand there may be only perverted function, defective innervation, or a disordered condition of general bodily functions reacting unfavorably upon the brain or seat of mental action. In other words, physical states that can be modified or removed by appropriate means, direct or indirect.

So, too, the mental phenomena are equally diverse. At one extreme, a certain number that possess only in a very slight degree the ordinary traits and characteristics of childhood. There is no observation, no curiosity, no comprehension or use of language, and no disposition or power to think or will or act, except as subject or motive is thrust in upon them from without. At the other extreme, another class who differ so slightly from ordinary children of the same age—and yet differ—that the nature and form of that difference it is not easy to define or describe. They were backward in the first manifestations of mental life, in infancy.

They were slow in learning to walk. Their control of the muscular system was acquired by slow degrees. Their tactile sensibility was blunted. They were deficient in the practical, every-day knowledge of childhood. They were more dependent than others upon parents and care-takers. Speech came by slow steps, and interruptedly. There was a want of the power of attention. They were remarkably yielding in disposition, or the reverse. When at last recourse is had to this or similar institutions, because the child cannot be educated elsewhere, it is almost always with the protest, on the part of the parent, that this one is not mentally deficient. Some kind of a cloud is over its faculties. His memory is very good, or some one of the other faculties is notably active.

Between these two extremes will be found every grade and shade of intermediate mental weakness or incapacity. So true is this, that, after more than twenty years' experience at the head of an institution designed for their relief,—an experience that has included a daily observation during that period of more than six hundred different pupils and an incidental notice of many others,—and looking, as my occupation calls me to do, upon these mainly as subjects of training and instruction, I am now at loss to offer any classification, worthy of the name, or that would actually represent the facts of the case.

Now, associate with the peculiar conditions and states, physical and mental, that have been roughly portrayed, numerous forms of impaired vitality and positive chronic disease, and you then have the problem as it presents itself to those who would ameliorate the condition of idiocy.

One step towards the solution of this problem, in the judgment of the Legislature of New York some twenty years ago, was to found an institution that should be both a sanitarium and a school; for, in the case of many pupils, as a preliminary, a degree of physical health and vigor was first to be established, and in others to be confirmed, by an appropriate regimen and the use of suitable medicines. The means and appliances were meant to be as numerous and varied as the educational necessities of the pupils. A definite system and series of exercises was provided, designed to reach down to the lowest cases, and terminating, in the opposite direction, only with the customary elementary studies of childhood.

If these have been well devised and are properly progressive, it will be seen that a pupil might enter at the lowest point, pass through

without any serious obstacle, and graduate at the upper end of the course. In fact, on the mind of the casual visitor to the institution, the impression is often made that this is the ordinary course of the pupils.

But such is not the fact, generally. More commonly a new pupil finds his appropriate place, depending upon his mental condition, at some point higher or lower in the scale of exercises. From this he progresses or is led along as far as is practicable in the term of years allowed for his instruction. The same limitations hold here as in any other system of education. These depend upon the individual capacities of the pupil. Now and then one of the pupils absolutely passes from the condition of idiocy and leaves the institution entirely capable of caring for himself thereafter. These are the exceptions; the rule is otherwise. Ordinarily, the highest aim of the training is to send out the subject of it, at the end of the course, so improved as to be capable of some useful occupation, under intelligent direction.

It will be observed that the result of the training and teaching is stated not by any summing up of customary school acquirements, as so much reading, so much writing, so much geography, or so much knowledge of numbers, etc., but rather in the capacity for occupation, which is the practical evidence of the intelligence, mental discipline, habits of diligence and obedience that well conducted school-room work in all these branches should develop.

Conjoined, then, with the exercises of the school-room are others, that aim at applying what is there learned, and the powers acquired thereby, to some practical work. This part of the system is susceptible of much greater development than it has yet obtained. A larger experience in the work will accomplish this.

To the pupils who have had homes to return to, where favorable circumstances could be brought to bear to confirm good habits acquired, and to continue the exercise of powers and faculties therein begun, this institution has been an advantage, the value of which it is difficult to estimate. In the case of others less fortunate, there has been a drawback to its effectiveness that the establishment of a custodial institution alone can obviate.

Such an asylum would receive, first, those unteachable, or properly hospital cases, that, as has already been stated, now interfere with the most successful and satisfactory operation of the educational institution. In such an one, their wants could be met in such a way as to promote their comfort and happiness to a considerable degree.

In such an one, their habits would be gradually improved, to the extent, at least, of considerably diminishing the trouble and annoyance their care involves under other circumstances. At the same time, the relief to the families from which they come can hardly be estimated.

Besides this provision, the custodial institution might receive the homeless graduates of the educational institution, and carry forward the work there begun with them. It could utilize, in a positive way, the capacities before acquired. It would embrace in its plan and scope simple industrial occupations, that would help to diminish the cost of support in such an asylum. It might use the intelligence and skill, before developed, in the care and management of the more helpless class committed to its charge.

This plan involves no large outlay for buildings, and but a moderate annual expense for the support and management of its inmates. The structure for their accommodation needs only to be plain, substantial and convenient. To warm, feed and clothe the inmates thus collected would cost but little if any more than if they were scattered, as now, in indigent families, or even in the county poor-houses throughout the State.

In England, where the matter of public provision for the class in question has been much considered and discussed, they are now being separated, and cared for by themselves, as a matter of public economy. This measure has been repeatedly suggested, in our annual reports, to the Legislature, and is again renewed this year.

The room already obtained, and that to be furnished by the remainder of the appropriation of last winter, when expended, will give a total capacity of 220 pupils.

This will suffice to meet the present educational wants of the State for its idiots, of a proper school attending age and condition. In this estimate, the fact is considered that the city of New York has an institution of its own for the reception of pupils of the most indigent class. In this estimate, also, it is to be understood, that in the future management of this asylum the unteachable or hospital cases are to be quite rigidly excluded. That when such are admitted, inadvertently, they are to be dismissed promptly, after a fair trial. That when the practical ends of education in any case have been accomplished, all pupils are to be dismissed to make room for new applicants. This plan of exclusion and dismissal can only be fairly carried out after the establishment of a proper custodial institution ; either

in connection or apart from it, where the unteachable and hospital cases may go, at the outset; and also for the reception of those who have passed through the educational institution. Till this is done, some of the cases of idiocy most afflictive to the families in which they occur, must remain a burden upon their friends, or the public. Till this is done, some of the graduates of our asylum must be returned to the care of friends, or elsewhere, to lose in part, the benefit obtained by proper training and management here.

In concluding this report, it gives me pleasure to say that my assistants in every department, have labored zealously and efficiently in promoting the general objects of the institution.

H. B. WILBUR.

Superintendent.

SYRACUSE, *January 1, 1872.*

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 30, 1871.*

DR.

1870.		
Oct. 1.	To cash from State Treasurer.....	\$6,250 00
Dec. 8.	To cash from State Treasurer.....	6,250 00
1871.		
Mar. 15.	To cash from county treasurers, clothing State pupils	2,451 65
Mar. 19.	To cash from State Treasurer.....	6,250 00
June 7.	To cash from State Treasurer.....	6,250 00
	To error	2 36
Sept. 30.	To cash from pay pupils for board, instruction and clothing.....	4,850 80
"	Balance (over draft) etc.....	1,795 70
	Due superintendent on contingent account....	20 34
		<hr/>
		\$34,120 85
		<hr/>

CR.

1870.		
Oct. 1.	By over draft.....	\$1,468 31
1871.		
Jan. 1.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee for quarter ending December 31, 1870	8,662 43
April 1.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee for quarter ending March 31, 1871...	8,121 74
July 1.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee, for quarter ending June 30, 1871....	6,227 47
Sept. 30.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee for quarter ending September 30, 1871	4,769 76
	Sundry bills paid by steward during year.....	4,871 14
		<hr/>
		\$34,120 85
		<hr/>

The above mentioned vouchers have all been rendered to the State Comptroller.

APPENDIX TO 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 on construction account; moneys appropriated by chapter 715, Laws of New York, 1871.*

DR.

1871.		
June 7.	To cash from State Treasurer	\$5,000 00
Oct. 2.	To cash from State Treasurer	10,000 00
		<hr/>
		\$15,000
		<hr/>

CR.

Oct. 1.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee, for sundry bills rendered to the State Comptroller.	\$6,688 64
Oct. 12.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee.....	2,620 56
Oct. 24.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee.....	1,294 28
Oct. 16.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee.....	126 10
Oct. 18.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee.....	88 27
Oct. 20.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee.....	42 50
Oct. 26.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee.....	324 26
1872.		
Jan 8.	Balance in bank	3,815 39
		<hr/>
		\$15,000 00
		<hr/>

APPENDIX.

EXTRACT FROM THE BY-LAWS OF THE ASYLUM.

“ The design and objects of the ~~asylum~~ ^{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, what part and 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 per-

son 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, etc., 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 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 afterward. 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 this 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.

