

REPORT

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OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE,

RELATIVE TO THE



AFFAIRS OF THE STATE LUNATIC HOSPITAL,

OF

PENNSYLVANIA.

at Harrisburg

IN THE SENATE, MARCH 29, 1854.

Ordered, That one thousand extra copies be printed for the use of the Senate.

HARRISBURG:

A. BOYD HAMILTON, STATE PRINTER.

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REPORT.

Mr. M'CLINTOCK, from the Select Committee, appointed by the Senate to examine into the alleged mismanagement of the Pennsylvania State Lunatic Hospital, involving the character of its Superintendent and Physician, John Curwen, M. D., submitted the following REPORT:

The first steps of an institution, such as the one presented to our notice, no difference under what guardianship it may be placed, are almost universally feeble; and if, in this instance, it has failed to leap at once into vigorous manhood, without an awkward and misdirected step, it would be an anomaly in the constitution of public charities.

The foundation of all this vague complaint arose from an original defect of direction and control, in permitting the architect to become the contractor and builder; which, from the defective character of the work—not easily detected at the time—necessarily led to large expenditures to accommodate the wards to the wants and comforts of their unfortunate inmates.

It is not desired to reflect on either the wisdom or intelligence of the distinguished gentlemen who, as commissioners, were invested with power to issue proposals and contract for the construction of the buildings, included in the plan of the architect. They, no doubt, desired to reach the object of their appointment by the most economical course, and therefore accepted the lowest bidder, (lower by ten thousand dollars than any other,) who had ventured out of the sphere of his professional duty, and thus, as is too often the case, made a signal failure.

On the other hand, whatever may have been the errors, their purpose was commendable; and their untiring devotion to the performance of exacting duties, in the cause of humanity, whilst its memory will continue to spread a glowing sunshine over their future, will not fail to be fully appreciated.

In the matter of repairs and alterations, found necessary by Dr. Curwen, on his inauguration to the position of Superintendent and Physician, it would be manifestly unjust to hold him responsible for the required disbursements, no difference what the amount, so long as he acted in most, if not all, these projected improvements under the advice and consent of the Board of Trustees.

The attention of your committee was directed to the following facts, in their personal examination of the Hospital buildings:

The first alteration made was in the construction of hot-air flues in the central building, which were rendered necessary by the substitution of heating by steam for hot-air furnace and open fire places. Only part of this expense was paid for by the commissioners.

The next improvement was in the construction of the apparatus for cooking by steam, in the kitchen; at the same time the arrangement for heating the water for bathing was carried into effect.

The bake oven built by the contractor having been found very inefficient, another was erected of the most approved form and of the most substantial character.

The Trustees, at their first meeting at the Hospital, directed the re-construction of the bath-rooms and water-closets, which was not, however, commenced until the following spring.

The hot-air flues originally constructed having been found to be inefficient during the winter, the whole arrangement was changed during the summer of 1852, and the flues for the admission of the hot air and the removal of the foul air were constructed of a much larger size, and in a manner which has been found to answer the purposes very well. Owing to the manner in which the flues leading from the hot-air chamber into the parlors of the different wards were arranged, it was found, after trial, impossible to alter them in such a manner as to convey sufficient heat to warm the rooms, and the system of heating by direct radiation from steam pipes introduced into the rooms was adopted last fall, (1853,) and is found to answer admirably. The same arrangement has also been made in the basement rooms of the centre building. The sash of the windows throughout the wards were found to admit so much cold air, that it was absolutely necessary to make such alterations in them as would exclude the air more effectively.

The openings for the admission of the fresh air into the hot-air chambers were all extended during the summer of 1852, having been found to be so near the house as to admit too much air on one side and too little on the other. The expense of these was not great, as the labor of digging them was principally done by the patients and attendants.

The pipe conveying the water from the tanks in the centre building to the different parts of the Hospital, was so much exposed that it was broken by the freezing of the water during the winter of 1851-2, and it was necessary at once to replace it with new pipe. This latter was at once boxed up and covered with straw, to prevent a recurrence of a similar accident.

The window-guards in the patients' rooms have also been found so slender that the patients break them out, or escape by creeping under them, and it has been necessary to substitute stronger, which is done gradually, where the necessity for it is most urgent.

The repairs and alterations, caused by the shrinking of the wood work throughout the house, have been extensive, and are constantly required.

The building of the barn on its present site, and the outlay for its construction, which occasioned so much speculation and censure, will be explained by the testimony incorporated in this report. The only mistake made was in the fact that the excavation required to reach the north end of the floor and to prepare for the foundation walls proved more formidable than had been anticipated.

The more extensive and expensive alterations are detailed at length in the report of the Trustees for 1852. The expense of the different alterations will be found in the following list, giving the greater part of the expenses incurred for repairs, &c., since the opening of the institution:

Work done to the boilers.....	\$104 88
Fixtures to boilers for heating bathing water.....	257 88
Hot-air registers for centre building.....	155 25
Lumber for alterations.....	145 38
Expense of making carpets.....	51 50
Painting.....	403 02
Bake oven.....	158 56
Wages of carpenters engaged in alterations, &c.....	873 00
Fixtures for cooking by steam, &c.....	1,169 30
Lumber for altering hot air flues.....	112 00
Plastering the flues altered.....	397 03
Iron pipe to convey the water from tanks.....	1,332 50

Fixtures for the bath-rooms.....	\$1,32 50
Plastering in bath-rooms and water-closet.....	103 00
Alteration of the water-closets.....	1,31 93
Alteration and repairs to roof of cent.e.....	463 74
	8,668 30
Expense of digging a water thus far.....	710 00
Due for steam radiators for heating the parlors of the wards....	448 31
Due for gas fixtures, left unpaid by the commissioners.....	300 00
	10,131 61

The above is the whole amount paid and (part) still due for alterations and improvements absolutely required.

Morris, Tasker & Morris, steam radiators for heating the ward parlors.....	\$148 31
Wright, Pike & Co., crockery.....	104 25
Buck, Morgan & Stidpole, blankets.....	453 00
J. B. Shannon, locks.....	64 00
Charles Ellis & Co., medicines.....	184 12
Sayford & Cunkle, clothing for male patients.....	488 37

Your committee have not been able to find, in an examination of the store-bills, to which reference was made on the floor of the Senate, any appearance of extraordinary charges, and exonerate both purchaser and seller from all imputation of wrong.

FEBRUARY 23, 1854.

Committee met. Present, Messrs. McClintock, Piatt, and Darlington, when the following testimony was elicited. At the instance of the chairman:

Dr. CURWEN, appeared and stated that as certain charges had been made against the management of the institution, without being definite or tangible, he had, in his answer to the Senate, requested the appointment of a committee of inquiry to either silence or sustain them.

Col. ROBERTS, sworn—know nothing personally about extravagance. Know no particular point of extravagance. Have been through the Asylum frequently, always found things satisfactory and creditable. Accounts were kept loosely for a time, but are kept quite differently now. Book shown (“quarterly accounts”) so as to exhibit how moneys were expended. The two additional buildings (in the front yard) were put up at the expense of Miss Dix, and called Museum buildings. Barn was erected by resolution of the board. Committee appointed for the purpose made the contract; made by private contract; proposals not invited. Don’t know why the site was selected. Old barn had become worthless, one hundred and thirty-one acres included in the grounds. Object of purchase was to give occupation and recreation to patients and to furnish vegetables, &c., for institution.

Mr. RICHARD UPDEGROVE, sworn—am a carpenter by trade. There is a double decked threshing floor, and it was necessary to build against a bunk to get into the upper floor. A double decked threshing floor gives a great deal more mow room. The sum paid for building the barn was \$2,200 dollars, but only \$2,000 was paid on account of some things being omitted. This included materials. This is the general price of such barns. The barn is 58 feet in length and about 55 in width.

WILLIAM WELKER, sworn. Made a bargain for building the barn and finding materials. The barn is 68 feet by 54. There are other buildings connected with it making about 20 feet more. The committee were present once whilst the barn was building. I never heard them complain about the location. The price was to be \$2,200, and we allowed \$200 for some old material. Dr.

Curwin selected the location. I should think they needed such a barn there. The contract was made in March of last year. I put up the whole barn complete and found every thing. I built a barn for Mr. Haldeman, but it was not a double decker. Mr. Updegrave and I built it, we arranged the plan between us.

Dr. Dock, sworn. I have been through all parts of the Hospital, on various occasions. I have visited several institutions of the kind and never saw one better conducted. Have resided in institutions somewhat similar and never saw one better kept. I always found the Physicians at their posts. Have thought the Superintendent was pre-eminently calculated for such a position. The same may be said of the assistant. I never saw any thing calculated to excite the suspicion or warrant the belief of the existence of extravagance.

Dr. CURWIN, affirmed. I am Superintendent of the State Lunatic Hospital. I selected the site of the barn. It was fixed upon with the knowledge of the committee and without any objection from them. The entire cost of the barn was \$2,000. The grading was not estimated as an item of expense, as it will be done by the patients. Have ten acres now in wheat. There are about one hundred and ten acres exclusive of gardens and enclosed grounds. The farm was exhausted when it came under my care; of the one hundred and twenty-seven acres from ninety to one hundred only are fit for cultivation. The The Steward purchases under my direction. The heavy groceries are purchased at Philadelphia, at the lowest wholesale prices. The flour is purchased here at the lowest cash prices. The materials for clothing and all other articles are also purchased at the lowest cash prices. The bills show of whom all articles are purchased. Duplicate bills are made out, on the back of one of which an order is drawn on the Treasury. On the back of the other a receipt is taken for the order on the Treasurer. These are all on file. The receipts are about \$20,000. Debts due the institution about \$3,000. The debts due by it are about \$9,000.

On the farm we have a farmer and an assistant. There are four horses attached to the farm, and there are two carriage horses kept for the use of the institution. I have also a pair of my own. The assistant has one, and the steward one. There is now on the farm fifteen cows, four young cattle, and twenty-five pigs. Last summer we had nearly ten acres in oats and sixteen acres in corn. We raised seven hundred bushels of potatoes, for which I was offered a dollar per bushel, on the ground, two hundred and fifty bushels of oats, five hundred bushels of corn, (ears) and from ten to fifteen tons of hay. The proceeds of the farm would have been greater had it not been for the miserable condition of the fences. They are not sufficient to protect the crops from the deprelations of animals.

Our butcher is Mr. Metzger, though we occasionally buy of farmers in the neighborhood. Our flour is principally bought of Wilson and McCulloch, our groceries of Mr. Eby, Boyer and Hall and V. Hummel. We generally buy our linens, muslins, &c. of Unger, Rhodes, Eply, and Jones, our hardware of Fahnstock and Gilbert and clothing for patients of Sayford and Cunkel.

We have had great difficulty in collecting our accounts. Patients kept by townships and counties pay \$2,00 per week. There are two attendants to each ward and a watchman and watchwoman. Wages \$14,00 for man and \$9 for the woman per month.

The boring of the Artesian well was done by order of the committee.

The carpenter work was very poorly done, and repairs are constantly necessary from this cause. Those of the repairs which require immediate attention are directed by myself, without waiting for orders from the committee. The carpenter gets \$20 per month. Have paid out \$715 for the Artesian well. The water is now pumped up from the creek, which during every freshet is polluted by all the wastings of the barn-yards &c., in the neighborhood. The object of boring for the Artesian well is to get a supply of pure fresh water, for cooking purposes and as a resource in case of fire, and failure of the present

supply. The creek water is not fit for drinking purposes during certain seasons.

The committee requested the attendance of several other gentlemen familiar with the affairs of the Hospital, but viewing the foregoing with their personal examination at the Hospital sufficient to demonstrate that no serious or unusual fault existed, determined to make no further order for their attendance.

Although nothing has been developed during the examination presenting the shadow of a charge against the fidelity of the Superintendent to the best interests of the institution and the Commonwealth, it is respectfully suggested to the members of the board, with the perfect acquiescence of Dr. Curwen, that the first division of the third chapter of the by-laws of the institution should be altered so as to leave the appointment of the "Steward" in the same hands as that of the appointment of the Superintendent and Physician, whilst the control of the latter is left unaltered, each being alike responsible to the board.

Notwithstanding the accounts of the institution had been kept with exactitude, the committee thought proper to make suggestions which cannot fail to prove more satisfactory to Trustees, Superintendent and Steward, and expose with more clearness, the receipts and expenditures of the garden and farm.

The good house-keeping, the substantial comforts, the permanency of kitchen, heating, and water closet arrangements, the order and discipline that prevails throughout, the various wards, the classification of patients, and the quiet and harmony that exists in the free and unrestrained mingling of the respective classes, together with the parental care displayed by physicians and attendants, should make us feel proud of the genius, philanthropy and science that have combined to reach these results.

The "Angel of Mercy" is still impressing the hearts of men through the agency of such instruments as Miss Dix, who, with christian devotion to the cause in which she has enlisted a life time of service, seeks to build up, not idle monuments in commemoration of great deeds, but hospitals for restoring immortal minds to harmonious thought.

This interesting lady, looking very properly on the institution as the result of her untiring efforts, is still evincing her interest in its success by almost daily adding to the comforts and pleasures of its stricken inmates. Her action in this charity up to the present moment is made matter of history and may be considered as out of the record to repeat.

In reference to Dr. Curwen, we would speak, in the language of the board of Trustees in their report of last year, in terms of "high commendation for his fidelity, zeal and industry."

The cheerful and liberal service of John A. Weir, Esquire, the Treasurer of the board of Trustees, extended to this charity when it required aid, commands our attention, and deserves this public acknowledgment.

Too much praise cannot be awarded to the successive boards of Trustees that have, up to this time, conducted the affairs of this noble charity.

The great outlay consequent to carrying out plans of such magnitude as those proposed by the act of 1851, will have ceased after the present year, when, with small annual appropriations, an increased number of first class pay patients, and the steadily growing value of the products of dairy, farm and garden, the affairs of the institution promise to move along, for the future, in an even course of prosperity and usefulness.

JONAS R. M'CLINTOCK,
EDW. C. DARLINGTON,
WM. M. PIATT

