

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE,

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1833.

The Committee, to whom were referred sundry petitions praying for the establishment of a State Hospital, and also for an Insane Hospital, have had the same under consideration, and ask leave to

REPORT:

That, in the opinion of your Committee, a State Hospital would be of great public utility, and is needed on many considerations. Numerous complaints, which require a capital operation, and yet do not confine the patients, or prevent their being removed, but for want of the benefit of that skill and attendance which are furnished by well regulated Hospitals, linger on in distress, without any cure or relief. The benefits of such establishments have been fully tested in Europe, and in many of our sister States. Those who are unfortunately afflicted with complaints which cannot be cured by the ordinary course of practice, can resort to a Hospital, and there have the benefits of the best skill and attendance, and be sure of relief, if the disorders be within the reach of medical art.

There is nothing which calls more loudly on public charity, than the situation of those who require the most profound medical skill, or a capital surgical operation, in order to relieve them from sufferings and distress. It is a fact, that the medical art has not kept pace with the other useful sciences in this country, if it has in any other; but has been left to lag far behind. For this many reasons might be offered, which perhaps would not be useful at this time. It would have a direct tendency to promote that useful knowledge, to have a public Hospital established on liberal principles, and put under good regulations. Here the best talents and skill could be concentrated, capital operations performed, and the distressed relieved. Here medical students, by seeing practice, both in surgery and physic, which requires the most profound skill and judgment, would obtain much useful knowledge, which they can never receive in the common course of practice.

Your Committee have taken another view of this subject, which humanity forbids them to pass over in silence. It is ascertained that there are between two and three hundred insane persons in this State; many of them exposed to much suffering, the very pictures of misery. Some of them are in county jails, which can afford but poor accommodations for wretched maniacs. Others are taken care of by their friends; while many are left to wander wherever their distracted minds may lead them.

Their privations and misery are great, and have a direct tendency to augment their derangement and their sufferings. It is the opinion of your Committee, that there is no class of people whose situation calls so loudly on the State for legislative aid, as the insane; none that have, when rightfully viewed, such strong demands on the charity and compassion of the christian, the philanthropist or the statesman, as those of our fellow beings who have lost their reason. While the liberality of the State, and of individuals, has been extended to many other institutions, and to many different objects, nothing has been done for that class of persons who, on account of the loss of their reason, are necessarily shut out of society; and shall we shut them out of our compassion? Is it any argument that a christian community should withdraw its compassion for the insane, because they have lost that reason without which man is of all creatures the most wretched? Ought we not rather to do by them as we would wish to be done by, did we know it would be our lot to be in a similar condition? Does it comport with civilization and the christian religion, to let the insane suffer for the want of that attention and assistance which it is in our power to confer upon them? How often is our sensibility shocked, our hearts pained, and even our humanity put to the blush, when we see the poor maniac wandering without where to lay his head!

It is not, however, merely to provide a refuge for the insane, that a Hospital is necessary. Many of those who are deranged might be restored to sanity and health, by skilful treatment and kind attendance, in a close retirement from those scenes which excite attention, disturb and agitate the mind; and be restored to society and usefulness.

It needs no argument to prove that a well-regulated Hospital is the only suitable place for the successful treatment of insane patients; the fact having been demonstrated, in numerous instances, in this, and many of the enlightened nations of Europe.

After mature deliberation on the subject, your Committee are of the opinion that a State Hospital ought to be erected, and that a certain portion of it should be appropriated to the use of the insane; and have ordered me to report a Bill, which is herewith submitted.

JOHN BURNHAM, *Chairman.*

STATE OF MAINE.

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED
AND THIRTY-THREE.

AN ACT in addition to “An Act to incorporate
the Medical School Hospital.”

SEC. 1. *Be it enacted by the Senate and*
2 *House of Representatives, in Legislature as-*
3 *sembled,* That the Corporation created by the
4 Act to which this is additional, shall hereafter
5 be called and known by the name of the **Maine**
6 **General Hospital**; and the **Governor and Mem-**
7 **bers of the Council,** for the time being, shall be
8 **Members** thereof.

SEC. 2. *Be it further enacted,* That said
2 Corporation may erect and establish such
3 buildings and departments as they may think
4 advisable, for the security and medical treat-
5 ment of insane patients.

SEC. 3. *Be it further enacted,* That the
2 sum of thirty thousand dollars be, and is hereby
3 granted to said Corporation, for the purposes of

4 their Institution, provided so much shall here-
5 after be received by this State on account of the
6 claim on the United States, commonly called
7 the Massachusetts Claim; or such less amount
8 as may be so received.

SEC. 4. *Be it further enacted*, That said
2 Corporation shall appropriate at least two thirds
3 of all such sums as may be received from the
4 State for the purposes of the Insane Hospital
5 department, and shall be held and obliged to
6 receive and provide for all such insane persons
7 as shall, by law, be committed thereto, for secu-
8 rity or medical treatment, at the actual expenses
9 thereof, deducting the income of the funds re-
10 ceived for the purposes aforesaid.

SEC. 5. *Be it further enacted*, That any
2 two of the persons, named in the Act to which
3 this is additional, may call the first meeting of
4 said Corporation, by publishing the time and
5 place thereof in all the newspapers printed in
6 Hallowell and in Portland, six weeks previous
7 to the time of holding said meeting.

IN SENATE, February 16, 1858.

Read, and three hundred copies ordered to be printed for the use
of the Legislature.

[Extract from the Journal.]

Attest,

T. J. CARTER, *Secretary*.

I. BERRY & CO., PRINTERS TO THE STATE.
