

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1848.

Augusta:

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1849.

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE.

No. 31.

SENATE.

STATE OF MAINE.

THE joint select committee appointed to visit the state prison to make an examination in relation to the classification of convicts, as recommended by the governor in his annual message, and also the erection of a hospital as recommended by the warden in his annual report, have attended to the duty assigned them, and ask leave to submit the following

REPORT:

The committee waited on the warden at the prison, on the twenty-first instant, who very politely received them, and extended to them every possible facility for prosecuting the object of their visit. The committee spent most part of the day in examining the cells of the prison, hospital, and the various departments of labor embraced in the institution. The committee found the warden to be correct as to the required improvements, as we also found the statements made by Hon. Mr. Kimball, member of the senate, and Mr. Cochran, member of the house, who gave the committee a full and clear description of the prison and its different departments, before the sub-committee were selected,—and we cannot but speak highly of the recommendations so strongly urged by them to the

committee, and since we have visited the prison, we can but wonder that the improvements and alterations we shall recommend have not been recommended before, by individuals intimately acquainted with the construction and situation of the prison. The attention of the committee was first called to the situation of the old prison, and they found on examination and inquiry, that the cells formerly used as confinement cells, are now unoccupied, and are so usually, unless some unruly or ungovernable prisoner is put into them for the purpose of punishing him for his misbehavior. The remainder of the old prison is sixty feet long and about twenty-three feet wide. The hospital is connected with the old prison, being in one end adjoining the new prison, and directly under the guard room in the basement story. It is lighted only by two small windows in one side, about eight feet high and not more than fifteen or eighteen inches square, being very dark and damp. It is even so dark, that in case the doctor has to dress a wound or extract a tooth, the prisoner has to be removed to some more convenient place. It is not only small and dark, but without any suitable chance to ventilate it, which is so essential for the sick. The door by which the hospital is usually entered is about three and a half or four feet high, and about one and a half wide, which opens into the prison yard, and the only ventilation is through an iron grate which covers the door way by which the hospital can be entered from the guard room. It is necessary that this grate should remain uncovered in order that the guard can see what is going on in the hospital, while he is so situated that he can glance over the prison yard at the same time. Thus it will be seen that all stench which may arise from the hospital is liable to pass up into the guard room, and from that into the clerk's office at any time when the door is opened, and even into the room where the cooking is done for the officers of the prison. Your committee think the dignity of the state,—the comfort of those unfortunate individuals who are there, some of them to spend the remainder of their days, while others to spend the best part of their lives,—that the obligations binding on us as accountable beings, call on us to provide for them in their condition. That

the state should provide a place for them where they may be made comfortable when they are sick. We ought to be proud when we remember that we have the least number of criminals of any state according to the number of inhabitants,—and, having the least, let us provide for them as well as any state.

Therefore, your committee would recommend that there be one story put on to the old wing of the prison, which shall be so constructed as to have a passage-way leading directly from the guard room through the centre of said building, with rooms on one side for the sick, and a dispensary in such place as the officers of the prison think will be the most convenient; and on the other side rooms for solitary labor—a plan of which is annexed to this report. Your committee would also recommend, that the same be built of granite and the roof slated, together with the roofs of the warden's house and the guard house, which are in a very leaky condition and also liable to take fire. The additional expense of slating would be trifling compared with the safety. If this alteration and improvement is made, there would be no danger of fire in case either the workshops should burn, as was the case a few years since. But as they now are there is great danger of fire, and nothing but the untiring watchfulness of the officers of the prison has prevented it until now. It will be seen by the warden's report that there are in the prison ten convicts under life sentence and two under sentence of death. Some of these are hardened, vicious criminals, and exert a very bad influence over the less hardened criminal. Even some of those who are in for a term of years are disorderly and vicious prisoners, and have to be put into solitary confinement where the cells are so small that they cannot do any work, although they have a good trade and could be an income instead of an out-set to the state if there were cells for labor, as recommended above.

Thus it will be seen that the interest of the state not only requires that these cells should be constructed, but it is a duty we owe to the friends and relatives of many of these unfortunate victims, who, by proper classification and treatment, may yet be restored to their friends to become useful members to society.

Your committee visited the cell of Dr. Coolidge, which is as convenient and airy as can be afforded him under the present construction of the prison, but yet it is so small that he can neither work nor exercise—the effect of which must be very injurious to his health. The cell is about four feet wide and eight long, in which is his bed, and stools which serve as a table and chair; so it must be readily seen that the chance for exercise must be small. He is the only convict sentenced to solitary confinement.

The committee therefore recommend that the warden be instructed to provide for him a larger cell, either by removing the partition between two of these cells or in any other way or place that the warden and inspectors shall think would be the most safe and convenient.

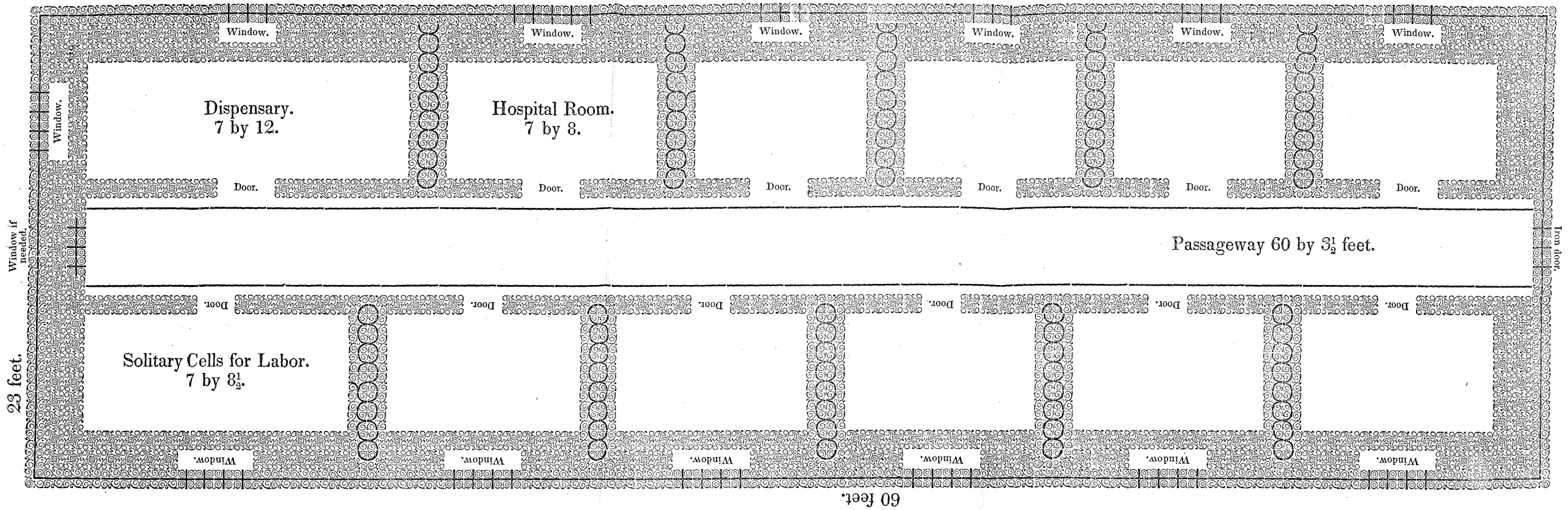
Your committee would also recommend that the chaplain be appointed by the warden and inspectors, as the present one resides some ten or twelve miles from the prison and is not able to fulfill the requirements of the law, and your committee think that he should reside within the immediate vicinity of the prison.

The committee found every thing in and about the prison in the most perfect order, being clean and neat,—as were also the prisoners—which forcibly reminded the committee of the former reputation of the warden, inspectors and other officers of the prison,—from whom they received the utmost attention.

Your committee were of the opinion that the contemplated improvements and repairs would cost upwards of three thousand dollars, but inasmuch as a large part of the labor can be done within the prison, they recommend an appropriation of two thousand dollars for that purpose.

All of which is respectfully submitted, with accompanying resolves.

B. B. THOMAS, *Chairman.*



PRISON YARD.

Guard House.

Window if needed.

23 feet.

60 feet.

Iron door.

Dispensary.
7 by 12.

Hospital Room.
7 by 8.

Solitary Cells for Labor.
7 by 8 1/2.

Passageway 60 by 3 1/2 feet.

Window.

Window.

Window.

Window.

Window.

Window.

Window.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Door.

Window.

Window.

Window.

Window.

Window.

Window.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVES in relation to the State Prison.

Resolved, That the warden of the state prison is
2 hereby authorized and instructed, under the advice
3 and direction of the inspectors, to commence the con-
4 struction and erection of a building upon the old
5 wing of the prison, to serve as a hospital and solitary
6 cells for labor, and continue the same until completed,
7 upon the plan reported by the committee, with such
8 amendments as may be considered necessary by the
9 warden and inspectors ; and also to slate the roofs of
10 the warden's house and guard house.

Resolved, That there be appropriated and paid out
2 of the state treasury to the warden of the state prison,
3 a sum not exceeding two thousand dollars, to be
4 expended under the direction and supervision of the
5 inspectors, in carrying into execution the provisions
6 of the foregoing resolve ; and the governor is hereby

7 authorized to draw his warrant for the whole or any
8 part of said sums as in the opinion of said warden and
9 inspectors may be required.

Resolved, That the warden of the prison be in-
2 structed to provide a larger cell for Valorus P. Cool-
3 idge, either by removing the partition between two of
4 the cells or by constructing one in some other place,
5 which may be safe and convenient until the cells are
6 constructed which are provided for by the foregoing
7 resolutions.



STATE OF MAINE.



IN SENATE, July 28, 1848.

ORDERED, That 350 copies of the foregoing Report and accompanying Resolves be printed for the use of the Legislature.

DANIEL T. PIKE, *Secretary.*