

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING THE

EXTRA SESSION OF 1853, AND SESSION OF 1854.



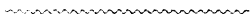
Augusta:

WILLIAM T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1854.

REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON STATE REFORM SCHOOL,
EMBRACING
COMMUNICATION FROM THE TRUSTEES
AND
REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT.

1854.



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COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

STATE OF MAINE.

THE Committee on the State Reform School, in pursuance of an order of the Legislature, directing them "to visit the school in person, to examine the condition and affairs of the same," would respectfully

REPORT:

That they have made such observation of the condition of the school, as they were enabled to do in a single day. The examination was highly satisfactory to the members of the committee. The condition of the institution reflects credit on its officers. The management of the school by the superintendent, seems judicious and prudent, and his administration of its affairs is conducted economically.

Believing that the people of the State, who have so laudably undertaken the reform of the juvenile offenders within our borders, have a right to expect, as early as practicable, a detailed account of the operations of the school, the committee have taken measures to procure the report of the superintendent, brought down to the present time.

The law requires the superintendent to make his report to the trustees, annually, in the month of November. Last year, at that time, vacancies existed in the board, and the same was not organized. The school had been open for a short time

only for the reception of boys. From these considerations, no report was made by the trustees to the governor and council, as contemplated by law.

The committee avail themselves of the subjoined report of the superintendent, furnished by the trustees, and transmit the same, together with the correspondence, to the Legislature.

All which is submitted.

J. L. CUTLER, *Chairman.*

SENATE CHAMBER, }
March 30, 1854. }

GENTLEMEN:—The Committee on the State Reform School, deem it desirable, that information respecting the institution, more extended than has come within their limited means of observation, should be presented to the Legislature now in session. With this view, I take the liberty of suggesting to the trustees the propriety of asking from the superintendent, a detailed statement of the operations of the school, up to the present time.

Respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. L. CUTLER, *Chairman.*

To the Trustees of the State Reform School.

STATE REFORM SCHOOL, }
Westbrook, 2d April, 1854. }

Hon. JOHN L. CUTLER,

Chairman of Committee on State Reform School:

SIR:—In reply to your note of the 30th ultimo, we have the honor to transmit, for the use of your committee, and of the Legislature, a copy of a report recently made at our request, by the superintendent of the institution, in which will be found a full account of the present condition of the school, and of its operations up to the 30th March last.

HENRY CARTER,	}	<i>Trustees</i>
OLIVER L. CURRIER,		
JAMES T. McCOBB,		
JOSEPH H. WILLIAMS,		
WM. A. RUST,		
		<i>State Reform School.</i>

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

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*To the Trustees of the State Reform School:*

GENTLEMEN:—In accordance with your request, the following statement of the operations of the Institution from the time when the first boy was received, November 14, 1853, to April 4, 1854, inclusive, is respectfully presented.

|                                |    |    |
|--------------------------------|----|----|
| Whole number received to date, | 25 |    |
| Discharged by order of Board,  | 1  |    |
|                                | —  |    |
| Remaining in the school,       | 24 |    |
| Of these, there were received— |    |    |
| From Kennebec County,—         |    |    |
| Hallowell,                     | 2  |    |
| Augusta,                       | 2  |    |
| Gardiner,                      | 2  |    |
|                                | —  | 6  |
| “ Cumberland “                 |    |    |
| Portland,                      | 10 |    |
| Bridgton,                      | 1  |    |
|                                | —  | 11 |
| “ Penobscot, “                 |    |    |
| Oldtown,                       | 1  |    |
| Bangor,                        | 3  |    |
|                                | —  | 4  |
| “ Hancock “                    |    |    |
| Sedgwick,                      | 1  | 1  |
| “ York, “                      |    |    |
| Saco,                          | 1  | 1  |
| “ Oxford, “                    |    |    |
| Waterford,                     | 1  |    |
| Hiram,                         | 1  |    |
|                                | —  | 2  |
| Total,                         |    | 25 |



The authority by which they were committed is as follows :

|                            |           |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| By Supreme Judicial Court, | . . . . . | 9         |
| By Portland Municipal “    | . . . . . | 7         |
| By Augusta “ “             | . . . . . | 1         |
| By Hallowell “ “           | . . . . . | 2         |
| By Gardiner Police “       | . . . . . | 2         |
| By Justices of the Peace,  | . . . . . | 4         |
| Total,                     | . . . . . | <u>25</u> |

They were committed for the following offenses, viz :

|                                                                           |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Larceny, . . . . .                                                        | 21        |
| Common runaway, . . . . .                                                 | 1         |
| Breaking and entering a shop with intent to commit a<br>felony, . . . . . | 3         |
| Total, . . . . .                                                          | <u>25</u> |

The following is the length of their sentences :

|                                  |           |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| During their minority, . . . . . | 8         |
| For 5 years, . . . . .           | 1         |
| For 4 years, . . . . .           | 5         |
| For 3 years, . . . . .           | 4         |
| For 2 years, . . . . .           | 1         |
| For 1 year, . . . . .            | 6         |
| Total, . . . . .                 | <u>25</u> |

The alternate sentences were as follows :

|                                            |   |
|--------------------------------------------|---|
| For 5 years in the State Prison, . . . . . | 1 |
| “ 4 “ “ . . . . .                          | 1 |
| “ 3 “ “ . . . . .                          | 2 |
| “ 1 “ “ . . . . .                          | 4 |
| “ 6 months in gaol, . . . . .              | 2 |
| “ 3 “ “ . . . . .                          | 2 |
| “ 2 “ “ . . . . .                          | 2 |
| “ 60 days in gaol, . . . . .               | 2 |
| “ 50 “ “ . . . . .                         | 2 |
| “ 30 “ “ . . . . .                         | 2 |

|                                |       |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| For 10 days in gaol, . . . . . | 1     |
| “ fine and cost, . . . . .     | 4     |
|                                | <hr/> |
| Total, . . . . .               | 25    |

They were born in—

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Ireland, . . . . .       | 1     |
| England, . . . . .       | 1     |
|                          | <hr/> |
| Foreigners, . . . . .    | 2     |
| Maine, . . . . .         | 16    |
| Massachusetts, . . . . . | 4     |
| New Hampshire, . . . . . | 1     |
| Rhode Island, . . . . .  | 1     |
| Florida, . . . . .       | 1     |
|                          | <hr/> |
|                          | 23    |
|                          | <hr/> |
| Total, . . . . .         | 25    |

They were of the following ages when committed:

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Ten years of age, . . . . . | 2     |
| Eleven “ . . . . .          | 4     |
| Twelve “ . . . . .          | 2     |
| Thirteen, “ . . . . .       | 1     |
| Fourteen, “ . . . . .       | 8     |
| Fifteen, “ . . . . .        | 6     |
| Sixteen, “ . . . . .        | 1     |
| Seventeen, “ . . . . .      | 1     |
|                             | <hr/> |
| Total, . . . . .            | 25    |

Average age  $13\frac{1}{2}$  years.

The design of the Institution is not perhaps fully understood in all parts of the State. While some suppose it to be a school simply for the care and education of youth who might be admitted without the form of trial, others have regarded it only in the light of a prison for the punishment of crime. It is difficult to determine its exact position between these two extremes.

The act to establish the Reform School declares it to be "A school for the instruction, employment and reform of juvenile offenders." Its object is to take those boys who might otherwise be subjected to the degradation of prison discipline, and exposed to the unavoidable corruption of older offenders, and separate them from such vicious influences; to instruct them in their duty to God, to their companions, and to society; to prepare them to earn an honest livelihood by honorable industry in some trade or agricultural employment; and give them such moral and intellectual education as will enable them to discharge successfully the common business of life.

In every town there are some parents who exercise little or no salutary control over their children. Vicious or thriftless themselves, their children very naturally imitate their bad example, unless some other influences are brought to bear upon them to lead their minds into a more healthy channel. At that tender age, when the mind and character most easily yield to the guidance of others, these children and youth become offenders against the well-being of society, and the laws of the State; and unless some restraining hand is stretched forth, they go on still deeper in crime, more and more hardened, until they become a charge upon the community, in the prisons of the commonwealth.

How often have judges and jurors been deeply moved with pity, when obliged to sentence to ignominious punishment some bright, intelligent boy, who has been reared under such unfortunate circumstances. How often has such a boy become a pest to society, who might have been reclaimed by the influence of such an institution as the one which this State has so nobly founded.

Some have regarded the establishment of a Reform School in this State as an experiment. Can it be justly so considered in view of the happy results arising from similar establishments elsewhere? Some of them have been in operation more than twenty-five years. Could we see the noble array of young men

now filling respectable positions in society, who look back with gratitude to the time when the doors of a reform school were opened to receive them,—when their erring feet were fast leading them down to ruin, we should be convinced that no State in the Union should be without an establishment of this kind.

The maximum age required for admission to this school, is two years higher than that fixed in any other. Boys that are full grown in stature, and hardened in crime, cannot be considered suitable associates for those of more tender years. I am aware that age alone is not a proper criterion for determining whether or not a boy is a suitable subject for the discipline of a reform school. But in the greater number of cases, boys over sixteen years of age, would be very unsuitable subjects, and should not be sent here. There may be, and doubtless are, boys over sixteen, that it would be well to receive; but the courts and magistrates should exercise great discrimination in cases of this sort, or the institution will be filled with boys requiring stronger bolts and more severe discipline to control them than a reform school affords.

Twelve of the twenty-five boys received, have been imprisoned for crime before being sent to the Reform School; some of them many times. One, who is now but fourteen years old, has spent two of the last four years in jail waiting his trial for different crimes. He has been convicted many times; but on account of his youth, has been discharged with some nominal punishment, but without effect, as he has never failed to be immediately engaged again in crime. He has been with us about two months, and seems to be improving in every respect.

Six have been committed for one year. In most cases one year will be too short a time to accomplish a confirmed reformation in a vicious boy, and the object of the school would generally be promoted by a longer term. The trustees are authorized by law to discharge, in all cases, at such time as they think a boy reformed; so that if boys were generally committed during their minority, they would receive an honorable

discharge when reformed, or be apprenticed, without regard to the length of term of commitment—the trustees still acting as their guardians.

It may be proper very briefly to state some of the leading points of the system we shall, with your approbation, attempt to carry out, in conducting the affairs of the school.

We design to render everything as much unlike a place of *penitentiary punishment* as possible under the circumstances.

Those who may be sent here, will generally have acquired roving habits, and restraint will at first be irksome to them, and a desire to escape, strong. In many cases no hope can reasonably be entertained of the proper exercise of a reformatory influence over them, until they are made fully satisfied that they are so far confined, guarded and watched, that they *must conform* to rules and regulations.

After they have been under proper discipline and instruction a sufficient time to gain self-respect, and begin to realize the exercise of a moral influence to restrain them, we gradually extend their liberty until full confidence is established.

When they have arrived at that stage of improvement that reliance can be placed upon their word, we inform them that if they will give their *word of honor* that they will not leave the premises without permission, we will allow them to go to the fields to labor, without restraint, relying upon their word to prevent their escape. This leads them to feel that we are placing confidence in them, and the result usually is, they will make stronger efforts to *merit it*, by good conduct, honesty and industry, and soon become interested in all that pertains to the institution. They soon become so far responsible, as to be intrusted with half a dozen or more smaller boys to labor under their care in the fields, towards whom they feel all the responsibility of an officer of the school. They are also allowed to go into Portland, or other towns in the vicinity, on business for the school.

The *discipline* of the boys is always a matter of great solicitude, especially in the commencement of an institution like

this. To enforce discipline, we adopt the Grade system; believing this to be most efficient and impartial; producing better results than any other. By it every one takes that position among his companions, to which he is entitled by his daily conduct and character. He has the same motives placed before him that exist in society at large—for his standing among his associates is made to depend in a great measure upon his daily conduct.

The system consists of four grades, designated by the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4; 1 being the highest. When a boy is received, he is placed in the third grade; if his conduct is bad and he does not heed proper admonition, he is degraded to the fourth. A manifest desire for improvement will promote him to the second, and then to the first. There is also a sub-division of the first grade called the "*Class of Truth and Honor*"—a degree denoting the highest rank in school.

As a punishment, we degrade from a higher to a lower, and for encouragement for praiseworthy effort to improve, promote to a higher. The influence of these grades is felt and applied, alike in the school room and play ground, in the shop and on the farm. Upon most it has a much greater effect than severe corporal punishment. It leads him to the placing of true value upon character; as the grade number shows his moral standing in the school. Punishment is not inflicted at the time of the offense, but in every department a record is kept of all acts of misdemeanor, as well as all cases worthy of commendation; and this account is settled in the presence of all the boys every evening, when the offender has an opportunity to express his feelings, or make explanation, after the excitement has passed away. A record is then made of the conduct of each, in a book kept for the purpose. From this record book the grades are reorganized weekly. Corporal punishment is inflicted only in the *fourth* grade, and then as a *last resort*.

We depend much more upon appeals to reason and moral influences, and depicting the consequences of a life of vice, than upon any form of punishment. We believe much more can be

accomplished by kindness, sympathy and faithful appeals to conscience, than many are willing to allow. We would not be understood as advocating a non-resistant principle; for we find cases where more forcible means are necessary, and we make it a point to secure obedience at whatever cost. The government will be, as far as possible, that of a well regulated, christian family—mild and persuasive, but firm and decided.

Boys of the class usually sent to reform schools, have little or no self-respect, caring nothing for themselves or for the opinions others have of them, and looking only to the gratification of present inclinations. We therefore make it a first point, to lead them to respect themselves, that they may attach some importance to a good character.

It is not unfrequently the case that a boy feels that he has no friends—that all are against him—others, he thinks, may rise to respectability, but he never expects to do so; as a consequence, he makes no effort until this feeling is removed. Such need much careful training, to bring into active exercise the dormant energies of the mind—to lead them to put forth sufficient effort to overcome temptation.

Nearly all have been habitual *truants* or have *wholly neglected* school; of course they are very ignorant. Of the twenty-five we have received, six were unable to read—some of them did not know the alphabet—twenty-one could not perform a question in simple addition, and none could perform a sum in reduction. But six could write their own names, and two only could name the boundaries or capital of their own State. Though so large a proportion were *truants* before coming here, most of them have become much interested in their studies; some of them so much so as to spend a part of the time allotted to play, in *study*. Four and one-half hours each day have been devoted to school instruction.

*Employment.*

All are employed six hours of each day at some mechanical, agricultural or domestic labor. Of those now in the school, six are employed in the tailor's shop, making clothing and bedding for the institution; eleven on the farm, preparing a year's stock of wood, drawing manure, and in the care of the stock; two washing and ironing; one cooking, and four at miscellaneous work. The boys are taught to make their own clothes, and do their washing and ironing, cooking and baking. Our farm of one hundred and sixty acres, we regard as one of the most suitable means of employment that can be procured, as labor in the open air does much to secure health, happiness and contentment. A lad feels far less restraint while busily engaged among his companions laboring by his side, than when employed in a shop under the most favorable circumstances. He soon becomes interested in the methods of cultivating the soil—in the management of the oxen and horses—in successfully guiding the plow, or in the care of the poultry yard and piggery.

Some have expressed doubts whether the boys can be so far controlled, as to prevent them from escaping from the farm while at work. We entertain no doubts upon this matter, as we make the employment on the farm a special privilege, as a reward for good behavior. There has been no *attempt*, and apparently no desire, to escape from the premises since the school was opened, and none have betrayed the confidence placed in them.

In our farming operations, we shall labor under greater disadvantages for a year to come, than hereafter; as the farm is not fully stocked, and much extra labor, aside from the usual cultivation of the farm, must be performed. The grounds around the building must be laid out and graded—a suitable avenue to approach the building from the public highway must be constructed, and fruit trees should be purchased and transplanted, as there are but few fruit trees upon the farm. The



above, and many other things connected with a new institution, should be attended to early in the spring.

The boys have been remarkably healthy, but one day having been lost from their accustomed labor by illness.

A judiciously selected library is much needed for their use. We hope some measure will be adopted to furnish means to procure one.

In this connection, we take pleasure in expressing our gratitude and acknowledgment, to "friends of the school" in Portland, who so kindly presented, through Rev. J. W. Chickering, a valuable package of books; also, to Rev. Asa Cummings, for a similar donation.

The religious exercises consist of morning and evening devotion and Sabbath School. As the moral and religious education of our youthful charge is an object of prominent importance, we hope some arrangement will be made, at an early day, for regular preaching on the Sabbath. We have endeavored to give as many of them the advantages of public worship as we consistently could, by allowing them to attend the churches in our vicinity; but as our number increases, this will give but few an opportunity of enjoying this privilege.

We hope, under the blessing of a kind Providence, to accomplish in some measure, the design of the founders of this institution; and with your kind co-operation, pledge our most faithful labors for its success and prosperity.

Respectfully submitted.

WM. R. LINCOLN, *Superintendent.*

STATE REFORM SCHOOL, }  
Cape Elizabeth, April 4th, 1854. }

STATE OF MAINE.

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IN SENATE, April 8, 1854.

ORDERED, That 1200 copies of the foregoing report, with the accompanying documents, be printed—1000 of which for the use of the Legislature, and 200 copies for the Superintendent of the Reform School.

WILLIAM TRAFTON, *Secretary.*