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THE COMMISSIONERS OF PRISONS: 1ST.
HOUSE, NO. 30; JANUARY, 1872;
2ND. SENATE, NO.12, JANUARY, 1873;
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MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSIONERS OF PRISONS

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FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Commissioners
Commissioners of Prisons.

JANUARY, 1872.

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1872.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives assembled.

The Commissioners of Prisons submit the following Report.

The Board of Prison Commissioners was organized October 4th, 1870. It consisted then of Hon. ESTES HOWE, of Cambridge, Chairman; Rev. DANIEL P. NOYES, of Brookline, JOSEPH STORY, Esq., of Boston, and JOSHUA COIT, of Brookfield, Secretary.

Early in December Mr. Story resigned; H. G. Herrick, Esq., of Lawrence, was appointed in his place, but he did not qualify till April 17th, 1871. On the first Wednesday of July 1871, the term of office of Mr. Howe expired. He declined to be reappointed for the reason that he could not spare the time necessary for the proper discharge of the duties of the position, and John W. Candler Esq., of Brookline, was appointed in his place. On the 23d, of July Mr. Candler was chosen Chairman of the Board. No other changes have occurred, and the Board now consists of JOHN W. CANDLER, Chairman; Rev. D. P. NOYES, H. G. HERBICK, and JOSHUA COIT, Secretary.

In the Advisory Board there has been no change. It is composed of Miss H. B. CHICKERING, of Dedham, Mrs. H. F. DURANT, of Boston, and Mrs. N. A. LEONARD, of Springfield.

The doings of the Board during the year have been mainly the inspection of the prisons and the prison systems, the endeavor to establish at Greenfield a separate prison for women, and the preparation of plans called for by chapter 66 of the Resolves of 1871.

The first duty resting upon the Commissioners was evidently to ascertain, so far as possible, the exact state of things in our prisons, in order to the showing in this Report the actual condition of the jails and houses of correction in all the counties of the State, and as well, in order to the classifying, as far as practicable, all prisoners held under sentence. It appeared at once that the first effort at classification should be that having reference to sex, and so the endeavor was made to establish at Greenfield a separate prison for women. By Resolve, chapter 66, 1871, the subject of establishing State prisons for women, was referred to this Commission for report to the next legislature.

EXPENSES.

The expenses of the Commission for the year 1871

have been	\$2,778 65
Salary of Secretary,	2,000 00
Travelling expenses of Secretary,	442 99
Travelling expenses of other members of Commission and of Advisory Board,	288 67
Stationery and books,	31 89
Postage and telegraphing,	15 10
	<hr/>
	\$2,778 65

Under the Act, chapter 348 of 1871, authorizing, for alterations of the jail at Greenfield, and other expenses incident to the use of said jail for female convicts, an expenditure not exceeding two thousand dollars, the Commission have approved an expense of \$598.66.

The expenses for 1870 were	\$798 26
Salary of Secretary,	\$483 87
Travelling expenses of Secretary,	170 06
Travelling of other members of Board,	102 89
Printing, postage and telegrams,	41 44
	<hr/>
	\$798 26

SEPARATE PRISON FOR WOMEN AT GREENFIELD.

The Commission, instructed by the second section of the Act for their appointment, to classify as far as practicable all

prisoners held under sentence, * * * in such a manner as to promote * * * the separation of male and female prisoners, made an earnest and patient effort to reach this end. They began in the western part of the State, because it seemed practicable to do something there. At Greenfield was a prison with but very few prisoners. There was frequently no convict in the house of correction, and no prisoner in the jail except a United States prisoner who occupied the chapel.

The higher courts had ceased to sentence convicts there, for the reasons that no work was provided, and that the prison was considered not safe for men.

There had been during the year ending October 1, 1870, 48 persons confined in the prison, 17 jail and 26 house of correction. The average number confined was 3.8, in jail and 4 in house of correction, and there are in the prison 32 cells. It was considered a good building though it proves to be very inconveniently arranged. It has good-sized cells, $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 8 on the floor, and $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet high.

It was determined then to make at Greenfield a separate prison for the women convicts of the western counties, and upon the 29th of December 1870, six women were removed from the Springfield house of correction, and one from Springfield jail to Greenfield. By subsequent removals and by direct sentences, there were twenty-two other women sent to this prison during the next seven months.

The reasons for the complete separation of convict women from convict men will be stated more at length in that part of this Report which treats this subject directly, but that this account of the experiment at Greenfield may be fully understood they should be briefly stated here.

In our county prisons, as a general rule, the poorest and most unfavorable quarters are assigned to women.

By separating the women from the men, both are benefited, in that when in the same building each is eager to communicate with the others; their minds are set upon it. With all the separation that now exists and that seems so complete, not only do old associates manage to communicate, but new acquaintanceships are made. Entire separation would be a great gain in this respect.

The present system does not tend to the reformation of men

or women. A prime necessity for attempting the reformation of the women is separation; the women at present are often under sole charge of men, day and night. In a prison for women, women would have the immediate charge of women.

There is now no provision for secular instruction.

The labor of women under the present system amounts to little, and the women are not trained to any useful trade or employment. Women now of different ages and crimes, old and young, drunkards, thieves and murderers, are treated alike, precisely alike.

The endeavor at Greenfield was to change these things so far as possible for the better. It is evident that success in such an attempt must depend largely upon the action of the local authorities,—the county commissioners, overseers, sheriff and jailer.

The county commissioners were seen and consulted with. They assented to the importance of the end sought for, but doubted the possibility of success, and deprecated any expense on the part of Franklin County. As guardians of the public funds they looked at the matter largely from a financial point of view, holding very justly, that if the State chose to try an experiment in Franklin County the State should pay the bills. However, they fixed a salary for the matron and furnished a room for her use, but demurred to any expense in altering the prison.

The overseers were more disposed to assist. They provided work for the women for a portion of the time,—the braiding of whip-lashes; they procured preaching on Sundays; they became somewhat interested in the experiment.

The sheriff, who is also the jailer and keeper, objected throughout. He prophesied failure and did nothing to endanger the success of his prediction.

The matron, Miss E. McNeil, did what she could for the women; she had the control and management of them. She instructed them in the braiding of whip-lashes, in reading and writing, and had religious service daily. Of the twenty-nine women under her charge, six learned to read, three to write and one to sew. She obtained and maintained a good influence over them and had no difficulty in controlling them.

The necessity for alterations in the prison building became apparent at once.

The county of Franklin had no desire to change its jail; and so, after a hearing before its prison committee, the last legislature passed a Resolve authorizing an expenditure, not to exceed \$2,000, for the purpose of alteration, and also to meet other expenses incident to the use of said jail for female convicts. Under this appropriation some alterations were made and others planned, but the Commission finding on the first of August seven men and boys in the jail whom they could not move, and there appearing to be a larger use of the prison for male prisoners than the statistics of recent years had warranted them in expecting, felt compelled to abandon the attempt to make at Greenfield a separate prison for women; so on the third of August, at a regular meeting of the Commission, it was voted to abandon the effort to make of Greenfield prison a separate prison for women.

It should be remembered that some of those most interested in this whole movement said from the first that it was useless to try to do anything for women with the existing prisons; that there must be a new prison in the hands of persons who sympathize with and have faith in the attempt to combine systematically reformation with punishment. But others said no; there are prisons enough already; use what exist; by removals, classify and separate. So said the legislature of 1870. And so the attempt was made. The question next arose, what else can be done? And it was thought that the women might be assembled in certain of the prisons where the most satisfactory arrangements could be had, where there were matrons and good work-rooms and cells. This, however unsatisfactory, seemed to be all that could be done under existing circumstances; so, for the western counties, Worcester was selected. The women's cells in this prison are good, and the work-room spacious and airy; and for the eastern counties, South Boston, East Cambridge, New Bedford and Ipswich were selected. And it has been the endeavor of the Commission to assemble the women convicts in these five prisons. The advantages of this plan are that the women are under matrons and have regular work.

In view of the reference to this Commission of the plan of

building one or more prisons for women by the State, to report upon to the legislature, it was not thought wise to expend more money at Greenfield. The experiment there seems to have shown that no one of our county prisons can well be used for a separate prison for women; that among the women in our jails and houses of correction, there are those willing to be taught and capable of learning to read and write and sew.

There was noticeable in Springfield, after the removals to Greenfield; a somewhat singular diminution in the number of commitments of women to the house of correction. During the three months before these removals there were thirty commitments; during the three months after, there were but thirteen; whereas the year before, during the months corresponding to the three before, there were thirty commitments, and during the months corresponding to the three after, there were twenty commitments. Another noteworthy fact, is that at the time of removal, the contractor for the labor in the Springfield House of Correction remarked, by way of complaint, that the labor of one of these women was worth to him nine dollars a week. He was paying for her labor eight dollars and thirty cents for three months—about sixty-four cents a week.

BOSTON JAIL (SUFFOLK COUNTY).

Sheriff J. M. CLARK, *Keeper*.

This is the largest jail in the State, having two hundred and forty cells, each 8 by 11 feet on the floor, and eleven feet high. It is generally full, and often crowded. From one hundred to one hundred and twenty prisoners come and go in a week, which is about half of the number confined all the while—and half of them are confined for drunkenness; some few are detained as witnesses, and there are always a few poor debtors.

There is no work done by the prisoners, except the work of the prison itself, and there is no secular instruction. There is no chapel service, because of the danger of having so many persons at liberty at the same time, with so few to guard them. The impossibility of providing officers for such service is not apparent. But there is a chaplain who is kind and faithful, and spends his time in and about the jail, doing what he can for the good of the prisoners, doing much by way of preventing young persons from becoming prisoners by giving bonds for their good