

**THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
INSPECTORS OF THE ALBANY COUNTY
PENITENTIARY, WITH THE DOCUMENTS
ACCOMPANYING THE SAME. IN JOINT
MEETING ASSEMBLED, ON THE SECOND
DAY OF DECEMBER, 1851**

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Third annual report of the inspectors of the Albany County Penitentiary, With the Documents Accompanying the Same. In Joint Meeting Assembled, on the Second Day of December, 1851 by Joel Munsell

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JOEL MUNSELL

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THIRD
ANNUAL REPORT ^{ct}
OF THE
INSPECTORS
OF THE
ALBANY COUNTY PENITENTIARY,
WITH THE
DOCUMENTS ACCOMPANYING THE SAME,

MADE TO THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF ALBANY, AND THE MAYOR
AND RECORDER OF THE CITY OF ALBANY,

IN JOINT MEETING ASSEMBLED,

On the Second day of December, 1851.

ALBANY:
JOEL MUNSELL, 58 STATE STREET.
1852.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD.

At a Joint Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Albany and the Mayor and Recorder of the City of Albany, held Dec. 2, 1851, under and in pursuance of the act entitled "An Act for the Construction of a Penitentiary, &c., in the County of Albany," passed April 13, 1844, his honor Mayor Perry chairman, and the Recorder, D. Wright, secretary.

The Inspectors of the Penitentiary presented their Third Annual Report, accompanied by the several Reports of the Superintendent, Physician, and Chaplain of the Penitentiary, which were read.

On motion of Recorder Wright, the following resolutions were adopted:

Resolved, That the report now made by the Inspectors of the Penitentiary be accepted by this joint meeting, and with the accompanying documents, placed on file.

Resolved, That the same be printed in pamphlet form at the public expense, under the direction of the Inspectors (in such number as they think advisable) for distribution among the city and county officers, and citizens of the county, for general information.

Resolved, That the members of this joint meeting hereby express their full satisfaction with the institution of the Penitentiary, its objects, management and results, and that they behold with surprise and admiration the remarkable and beneficial effects of a system so superior in its moral influence and pecuniary consequences to that which preceded it, and which it has superseded—results, which, although anticipated, were yet uncertain, but now triumphantly realized; and they congratulate the founders and advocates of the project on the fulfillment of their expectations and on the complete success of the enterprise.

Resolved, That the thanks of the members of this joint meeting are respectfully tendered to the Inspectors of the Penitentiary for the zeal they have manifested, and for their *gratuitous* services; and more particularly for the reason, that among them are recognized the projectors and first advocates and friends of the Penitentiary plan, who, under many discouraging circumstances, pledged their exertions for the ultimate success of a self-supporting institution of this character, and which has now been so happily realized.

Resolved, That to Amos Pillsbury, Esq., the Superintendent of the Albany County Penitentiary, belongs the honor and credit of having achieved practical results, which, considering the class and the character of the inmates of our

Penitentiary, has, it is believed, never before been equalled in this or any other country, and that for his invaluable qualities and services as chief officer and head of the institution, the thanks of the members of this joint meeting are eminently due and are hereby tendered.

On motion of Mr. Van Allen, the following resolution was proposed and unanimously passed, viz:

Resolved, That Amos Pilsbury be, and he hereby is, reappointed Superintendent of the Albany County Penitentiary, for the term of three years from the first day of March, 1852.

Mr. Southwick offered the following preamble and resolution, which were unanimously adopted, viz:

Whereas, The term of office of Gilbert I. Van Zandt, one of the Inspectors of the Penitentiary, expires on the first day of March ensuing, therefore

Resolved, That Gilbert I. Van Zandt, of the town of Watervliet, be, and he is hereby reappointed an inspector of the Albany Penitentiary, for the term of three years from the first day of March, 1852.

The joint meeting then adjourned,

D. WRIGHT, *Secretary*.

ELI PERRY, *Chairman*.

INSPECTORS' REPORT.

TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF ALBANY,
AND THE MAYOR AND RECORDER OF THE CITY OF ALBANY,
IN JOINT MEETING ASSEMBLED :

The undersigned, Inspectors of the Albany County Penitentiary, beg leave to present the following report :

Prisons of a disciplinary character for the most part are expensive institutions. Among the causes that tend to this result are the following : The sensitiveness of the public in respect to the competition that may arise betwixt convict labor and honest industry ; the consequent narrowing down of prison employment to overcome in a measure this objection ; the rawness of the prisoner at the outset of his occupation ; the want of tact in stimulating his voluntary industry ; and the pre-eminence of discipline to any consideration of mere expense. The bare fact of expense in connection with well disciplined prisons, is of course more lightly dwelt upon than when it is developed in those of an opposite character. The tax payer in the former case, if not exactly satisfied, is nevertheless consoled with the thought, that they are more or less influential in staying crime, which is in itself costly. And if perchance, any of them should become self paying institutions, his satisfaction as it regards their fitness and excellence, would be more than feebly expressed. State prisons, wherein lengthened sentences are undergone, have a decided pecuniary advantage over penitentiaries. In the

former, the convict labors with a facility and adroitness that can only be acquired by considerable experience. In the latter, how much time is spent in needful explanations. In the former, there is a sort of permanence and fixedness as it regards employment, which enhances its value. No such properties however can be engrafted on that ordinarily pursued in the latter. Here, the scene changes with a quickness and variety that reminds one of a panorama. The six months prisoner just commencing, as it were, to labor advantageously, vacates his bench, it may be, for one committed for less than thirty days. There is an unsatisfactoriness in teaching one under some circumstances, which even a disciplinarian of equable temperament overcomes with difficulty; for before his pupil acquires much more than the rudiments of his employment, he is discharged by expiration of sentence. If then, there be some ground for fault finding, provided a state prison does not sustain itself, the tax payer should be kindly disposed towards penitentiaries if found working out a similar result.

The residents of this county prior to the erection of the Institution with which the undersigned are associated, were grievously burdened in supporting crime. As the prisoners in the jail were unemployed, the entire cost of its maintenance devolved upon the county treasury. This might have been borne had it not been for other circumstances. But its condition and laxness of discipline; the idea that it was inadequate to the task of keeping under crime which was constantly on the increase; such considerations, stirred some active citizens to move in the matter of a penitentiary. It was built. And its influence has been such, that had it been to this day a drawback on the county treasury, it would have been justly an object of admiration to every reasonable tax payer. But it is not presented in the aspect of dependency. By referring to the last report of the Inspectors

it will be seen that for the year 1850, it paid its way within \$450-91. And the undersigned take great pleasure in saying that for the year ending on the 31st of last October, its receipts exceeded its disbursements to the amount of \$1,013-07. This fact challenges admiration; and more than this a competitor. It has achieved this pecuniary triumph, though 365 out of 627 prisoners committed during the year, were sentenced for periods that exceeded not three months; and out of the 365 above mentioned, the imprisonment of 159 varied from 30 to 60 days, and that of 24, for terms less than 30 days. The question may well be asked, where is the prison to be found that has worked out under similar circumstances, so curious and interesting an arithmetical problem. The mere profitableness of prisons uncoupled with any remedial results of a satisfactory character, would indeed be a poor argument in their behalf. But when one like the Albany County Penitentiary, has proved itself eminently successful in reference to discipline, it were no arrogance to dwell with feelings of pride on its prosperity considered in a mere pecuniary light.

There is but one sentiment expressed by all who visit this institution—that of agreeable surprise. Its location environed with beauty; the taste shown in the arrangement of the grounds; the commanding appearance of the building; its interior conveniences as a general thing; the singular cleanliness of its cells, workshops, hospital, kitchen, &c.; the exactness that is seen in all that concerns good management and discipline; the general health and tidiness of the convicts; and their submissive deportment whilst pursuing their occupations in unbroken silence—these are some of the thoughts that impress the visitant.

Whatever of success has followed this prison; whatever of reputation it has acquired as a disciplinary school, throughout the state, and indeed in many sections of the Union—all are owing to the invaluable services of its Superintendent—

Captain Pilsbury. The undersigned speak advisedly on this subject. At the request of your Honorable Body, he left an adjoining state in which he had held a prominent position for many years, and entered resolutely on the work of erecting the Penitentiary. When completed, you confided its management to his care. He has watched over it in its weakness and its strength. And his unwearied perseverance and singular tact in prison administration, which has been rarely equaled, has placed it in a most enviable position. His withdrawal from the sphere of his present labors and triumphs would indeed create a void that could not well be supplied. And the hope is indulged, that the authorities of this county may be so fortunate as to retain his services, which are so thoroughly appreciated by them as well as by their constituents.

The report of the Superintendent shows, that the number of prisoners in confinement on the 31st of October, 1850, was

147

Received from November, 1850 to October 31st, 1851, inclusive

627

Whole number committed during the year,

774

Discharged by expiration of sentence,

520

“ “ the Governor, (pardoned,)

13

“ “ magistrates, on payment of fines, and

for other causes,

66

 599

Number in confinement on the 31st of October, 1851, the close of the year,

175

Received during the year, males,

443

“ “ “ females,

184

 627