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FIRST BIENNIAL REPORT

OF THE

Board of Control

of the

Colorado State Home
for Dependent and
Neglected
Children

1896



DENVER, COLORADO
THE SMITH-BROOKS PRINTING CO., STATE PRINTERS
1897

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DR. ROSE KIDD BEERE, Superintendent

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

State Home for Dependent and Neglected Children.

December 1, 1896.

To His Excellency,

ALBERT W. McINTIRE,

Governor of Colorado.

Sir--In accordance with the requirements of law, we have the honor to transmit to you herewith, the first biennial report of the superintendent of the State Home for Dependent and Neglected Children.

(Signed.) BOARD OF CONTROL,

By Mrs. Dora E. Reynolds,
President.

REPORT.

To the Board of Control, Colorado State Home for
Dependent and Neglected Children:

I have the honor to submit herewith my first report of the work of the State Home for Dependent and Neglected Children.

The Home is situated at the corner of Fairview avenue and Bert street, in one of the most healthy and attractive localities of North Denver.

It is easily accessible by both tramway and cable lines, being only a block from the point of transfer from the Sixteenth street cars to the West End electric.

“The price of admission is dependency upon the public for protection and support.”

It is, under the law, the duty of every county commissioner, when he finds in his district a child dependent, or in manifest danger, to take steps at once for its examination by the county judge, who is the officer designated to decide upon its eligibility, so that through the plan arranged for sending them from every county, the benevolent purpose of the state may be carried out.

Owing to the fact that through legal technicalities, our appropriation did not become available until late last year, the Home did not formally open for the admission of children until March, 1896.

Only part of the amount allowed for the first year was secured; this was used to repair and furnish a building which the Board rented for temporary quarters; the second year's allowance has been used for the maintenance of the Home since it opened.

Since that time we have received and cared for sixty children, ranging in age from two weeks to fifteen years, of whom thirty-seven were boys, twenty-three girls; twenty-one are orphans, twelve half orphans and twenty-seven have both parents living.

The average age is seven years, though the younger children being more desirable for adoption, the average age of those remaining in the Home is nearly nine years.

Seventeen have been adopted, nine indentured and several are out on trial.

The health of the children has been exceptionally good; we have lost none by death, except four infants from the nursery department which, considering the artificial feeding, is not a high infant mortality.

Those over six years of age attend the public school, and I am informed by the principal that they are not below the average in intelligence and application, though as a rule they are older than the other children of their grades, from previous neglect of school opportunities. From the crowded condition of the schools, most of them attend but a half-day session. It is necessary, therefore, that they be instructed and employed at home during the other half day, but from lack of funds we have been unable to have this done except in the most primitive manner.

The clothing furnished is of a good grade and varies as much as possible in shape and color. It is especially desired by the management that nothing in the way of a uniform should stamp the inmates as institution wards.



THE NURSERY DORMITORY.

All clothing is made in the house except the boys' suits. Warm flannel underwear is provided for every child who, when he leaves us, takes sufficient clothing to last him two months. As few of them bring any clothing with them when they are admitted, this item of fitting them out for school and adoption is a heavy expense.

The food provided is wholesome in kind and variety and there is always an abundance of it. Fresh fruits and vegetables in season are given, on the principle that proper diet means good health. The bill of fare, approved by the Board of Control, is adhered to as closely as possible.

The children attend Sunday school at the nearest church.

We are under obligations to the medical faculty of the Denver university, who look after their health free of expense.

A close study of the "placing out" system has convinced the management that it has its dark side. We have many applications for children from people who come with good references and are unquestionably able to give a child a good home, if by good home is meant enough to eat and wear. But upon investigation we find that they will not pledge themselves to send the child to school six months every year, which means they want it simply for the work it can do; or the proposed home is one where domestic strife is not a stranger, or the people are wholly unfitted by nature and temperament to give a child kind, judicious training.

As the first consideration is the welfare of the child and not the convenience of the applicant, we are not infrequently compelled to refuse applications.

Every child who has been allowed to leave us for a private home is contented and happy, but the reports that occasionally reach us of children who have run away from homes where they have been placed

by parties interested only in "railroading" the largest number per annum through the forms of adoption, lead us to endorse the views of the best authorities in this work, who now insist most strongly, that the permanent good of every child entrusted to us is the object we have in view, and in many cases this is best subserved by keeping it with us, sometimes for months, instead of hurrying it off to a private home.

Then, too, there will always be a large number of children with us whose welfare demands they remain in the Home, many needing the discipline, the watchful care of institution life, until firmly grounded in good principles, and strong enough to resist temptation.

We must have the means for their teaching and training. We believe that prevention is better than cure; that money appropriated for this purpose will in the end prove a saving to the state, by reducing the number in the reformatory institutions; it has been so demonstrated in other states, and by supplying our dependent youth with better facilities for learning a trade and giving them moral training, we can do a great work. It is safe to say that the neglected children now growing up to lives of idleness, will cost the state infinitely more in the end than a liberal provision along the preventive lines.

We are in a rented building, with no ground except an adjacent lot, the use of which we enjoy only through the courtesy of the owner, and while it is not deemed advisable, during this time of financial depression, to ask for money for a building of our own, we must have ground for a garden, where a useful occupation may be learned, surplus energy worked off, and at the same time, the happiness gained that comes to children from an outdoor life with growing plants.

We need furniture for the house; we have the bare walls and echoing floors of a new institution; we desire to become a home in fact, as well as name.



THE BOYS' DORMITORY.

We need a school room and play room and work shop. We have no pictures, no toys, no dolls, no games, no swings, no hoops, no balls, no tools, no books, no music. These things are necessary for restless energies and busy fingers, to develop the affections, to make a home life. Parents give them; we stand in the parents' stead.

Before the end of another year we expect to have 150 or 200 children in the Home.



A CHILD PICKED UP IN AN ALLEY BY A POLICEMAN, AN HOUR AFTER BIRTH, APPARENTLY DEAD FROM EXPOSURE, THE NIGHT OF DEC. 1, 1895.

The people throughout the state are just beginning to learn that there is a State Home for Children.

We are in daily receipt of letters from county officials inquiring about it; visiting officials express themselves as surprised and gratified at what has been accomplished thus far.

In carefully going over the expenditures of the past year, the Board of Control find it will be impossible to do the work they desire for a less sum than \$25,000 for two years.

The members of our Board of Control, unlike that of any other public institution in the state, serve without pay. There is no per diem nor railroad allowance; they are giving their services and time, freely, conscientiously, hoping only to see this Home speedily take rank with those of the older states, as a preventive of crime, a power for good and a factor in better citizenship.

The appropriation they ask for will be spent carefully, judiciously. Can Colorado invest any of her state funds in a more humane manner or in one that will bring her greater returns in the future, or save her more in crime and its cost, than in the proper development of these young lives, which are bound to become powers for either good or evil in a few short years, and which have been deprived, either by misfortunes of birth or circumstances, of those influences of home and family which all acknowledge to be most potent factors in the formation of character.

Respectfully submitted,

ROSE KIDD BEERE, M. D.,

Superintendent.

No. 633 Bert street.

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