

JOURNAL

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House of Representatives

OF THE

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OF THE

FORTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE

BEGUN AND HELD AT

THE CITY OF AUSTIN, APRIL 22, 1929



VON BOECKMANN-JONES CO.,
AUSTIN, TEXAS.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO
VISIT DICKERSON COLORED
ORPHANAGE.

The Speaker laid before the House and had read the following report:

Hall of the House of Representatives,
Austin, Texas, April 29, 1929.

Hon. W. S. Barron, Speaker of the
House of Representatives.

Sir: Your committee appointed under

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Senate concurrent resolution No. 25 to investigate the Dickerson Colored Orphanage at Gilmer beg leave to report as follows:

Two of the House members appointed on said committee went to Gilmer on April 8 and inspected the orphanage. They were accompanied by Hon. Ray Holder, who acted as a personal representative of the Speaker, and by Hon. V. E. Conway, chairman of the Eleemosynary Committee. Mr. Lawrence Westbrook, the other member of the House committee, was unable to join the committee, due to heavy rains and bad roads.

We were taken over the land by a committee of citizens and shown its extent and boundaries. The land will compare favorably with the average land in that vicinity. It is somewhat rolling and in part divided by another tract of land, and a highway runs through the entire tract. A railroad extends along an entire side of the tract. At the time of our visit, very little of the land was in cultivation.

We found that there were twenty-nine (29) so-called buildings on the orphanage campus. However, only four of these were being used for dormitories for the children. One building was used for the very small children (the babies), another for the larger negro boys, another for the large negro girls, and one for the very small negro girls. One mess hall kitchen was in use to feed the entire population. A few of the out-buildings were in use for a storehouse and for a storage room for farming tools. There was a demonstration building in use in which we were shown several negro girls at work. All of these buildings are frame construction, are heated by wood stoves with ordinary stove pipe, and are lighted by coal oil lamps. While we found them to be very clean and well kept, they are veritable firetraps and are totally unsuited to be used for housing any of the State's wards.

In the event that the State should see fit to take over this institution, we recommend that these buildings be not used for housing the wards of the State, but that new buildings be constructed for this purpose. They could probably be torn down and the lumber and other materials utilized in the construction of outbuildings, such as chicken houses, cow sheds, etc.

We found one well in use on the premises from which the entire supply of water was furnished. This was a

good well, and the supply of water seemed to be adequate. There was also another well on the premises, which was not in use.

The orphanage is located about three miles from the town of Gilmer, and your committee was told by a committee of citizens that they would furnish the Board of Control with an estimate of the cost of installing a modern lighting system and of putting in a modern water system.

The committee viewed the mules and the cows belonging to the institution and were not favorably impressed. We believe them to be of small value and totally inadequate to meet the needs of the institution, should the State decide to take it over. This is also true of the farming implements.

The institution is being maintained by a number of public-spirited citizens, who furnished food and other supplies to keep the inmates from actual hunger. We were told that in the event the State should take the institution over, these same citizens would raise \$35,000 which is now owed on the property of the institution in order to pay it off and deliver a clear title to the State. We heartily commend these citizens in their earnest efforts to alleviate suffering humanity and are fully in sympathy with their desire to have the State establish an institution for these unfortunate negroes. However, the committee feels that while the State owes a duty to all of its unfortunates, including its negro orphans, it would be very unwise to establish a State institution on the property now owned by the Dickerson Colored Orphanage, since it is so far from the seat of government and since it would require a large expenditure of money to establish an institution there of such character as the State would desire for its wards. We believe that the financial condition of the State at this time is such that an expenditure necessary to establish such an institution would be unwarranted, and we therefore recommend that the Legislature do not accept the offer made by those public-spirited citizens who are interested in its taking over this institution.

McGILL.
GILES.