

# The Laurens Advertiser.

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## REPORT OF STATE INSPECTORS ON LAURENS COUNTY PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

### County Almshouse, County Jail and County Chaingangs Visited by Secretary of State Board of Charities and Corrections and Report Made of Each.

The Advertiser is in receipt of the reports of Albert S. Johnstone, secretary of the State Board of Charities and Corrections, on the county almshouse, jail and chain gangs, the reports being made following the annual inspection made in February. Attached to the report was the following:

The attached is a report on the institution named. It is sent you because of your interest. You are at liberty to publish it, to discuss it with others, to treat it in any way that will increase its constructive value. If it contains any error or is unjust in any way, please let us know. Our earnest desire is to help in developing this institution, and others like it throughout the State, according to the best of modern standards.

The following are the reports by the secretary:

**Laurens County Almshouse.**  
Visited March 5, 1918, by Secretary Johnstone and Assistant Secretary Broyles, with Rev. W. S. Holmes and Superintendent W. B. Motte. Paupers present, 7; 5 whites and 2 colored. Average population for the past two and a half years, 8.

We desire to commend the efforts Superintendent Motte has made to enforce the rules of personal hygiene among the inmates of the almshouse, and also the County Commissioners for the medical attention they have provided for this institution. The sympathetic attitude of the management toward the inmates is also pleasing.

It is impracticable for individual counties to provide adequate county homes, with medical attention, nurses, facilities for properly classifying the inmates according to race, sex, age, and state of health, except at too great a per capita cost. In fact, the county almshouse system is out of date, plays a doubtful role in decreasing pauperism, and amounts largely to a place of human storage under unsatisfactory conditions. It should be abolished. In its stead should be developed district hospital homes for the sick poor and the aged infirm, each of such homes to care for the poor from the several counties composing the district, the expense therefor being prorated according to the number of inmates from these respective counties. There is a strong sentiment working toward this end and we are, therefore, discouraging large expenditures on present almshouses.

However, there are certain minor repairs and other changes that we recommend be made at the Laurens County Home:

(1) Screen the second story of the superintendent's residence; paint exterior; put all screening, flooring, porches, steps in thorough repair.

(2) Put all inmates' quarters, porches, steps, screening in thorough repair; paint exterior of cottages; scrape and paint interior walls and ceiling. After all, the cottage system

which obtains in outline at least, even if unsatisfactory, at the Laurens County Home affords these old people a life more like that to which they have been accustomed than would a congregate building of the type proposed.

(3) Provide a neat fly-proof commode for each room in the paupers' quarters for the use of those especially old and infirm, and install either a septic tank or surface closets of the dry fly-proof type, separate for each sex and race, with one for the exclusive use of the superintendent's family.

(4) Take some steps to beautify the grounds of the home.

(5) As may prove necessary, build an inexpensive shack for the care of tubercular inmates that, while sufficiently far away to protect the health of others, will at the same time be near enough for the patients therein to be waited upon conveniently; and possibly an additional two-room cottage for white inmates should the present facilities become overcrowded.

(6) Provide a competent colored servant to assist the matron in cooking, washing, etc., and in caring for the paupers and their rooms.

(7) As soon as possible abolish the present fee system of employing the superintendent of the almshouse. We have discussed this point with the county commissioners. In return for feeding and caring for the paupers at the almshouse the superintendent and his wife receive a home, the use of the farm and outbuildings, fuel, and \$2.50 per month for each inmate and \$5.00 for those in bed. About one-half the farm, namely, 150 acres, is under cultivation. We were told that this farm is worth \$10,000.00 to \$12,000.00. At 6 percent the interest on this would be about \$700.00. We were told that with the average population of about eight the cash paid the superintendent was about \$35.00 per month, which would be nearly \$120.00 a year for attending and feeding the inmates at the county home. The county physician receives \$180.00 a year for services at the county home. In addition the county furnishes medicines, the bedding and other equipment. All told, therefore, it seems likely that the county home represents an annual expense to the county of about \$1,100.00, in return for which (a) these few paupers are cared for, and (b) for a portion of each year the chaingang is housed in the stockade, which is heated by wood from the farm. The county gets no other return, we are advised. This makes the per capita cost about \$175.00 a year. The per capita cost at the State Hospital for the Insane last year was less than \$200.00. While we believe the fee system to be wrong in principle, we sympathize with the county commissioners in the difficulty they have had in getting a superintendent to manage this property and run the home for a salary they are able to pay; however, all this but emphasizes the need for abolishing our county almshouse system and developing district hospital homes instead.

### Laurens County Chaingangs, Gang No. 1.

Mr. J. L. McDowell, foreman. Visited March 5, 1918, by Secretary Johnstone and Assistant Secretary Broyles. Convicts present, 9 negro men, of whom 4 were trusties. The approximate daily population on the two Laurens gangs for the past two and a half years is 39.9.

On our fourth inspection, this gang scored 9 points higher than last year, due to the fact that Laurens is no longer using white men on her gangs. The white convicts are now sent to the penitentiary or kept in jail, according to the length of sentence. The foreman deserves credit for his attention to personal hygiene among his prisoners.

However, to better the health and efficiency of the prisoners and to raise the score we recommend that the commissioners provide a tent or wheeled car for cooking, and then remove the present partition between the sleeping quarters and kitchen, using both rooms thus thrown together as a dormitory for the men. Cut a window in the end of the enlarged room, and two windows in the rear wall. The present quarters, the stockade at the county home, are fearfully close, with practically no ventilation possible.

### Gang No. 2.

Mr. M. S. Godfrey, foreman. Visited March 5, 1918, by Secretary Johnstone and Assistant Secretary Broyles. Convicts present, 15 negro men.

The score of this gang varies only one point from last year's score, our recommendations made then having been disregarded. We commend the foreman for the use of straw beds properly elevated above the ground and for his efforts to keep his men clean. We strongly recommend that he move the mule tent farther from the sleeping quarters, especially during the summer, and that he pile the manure daily, hauling it away from camp regularly every week. Further he should have the kitchen thoroughly cleaned up, and should discard the filthy oil-cloth table cover. The commissioners should provide either a new tent or a screened car for a kitchen, as the present tent is in very bad repair. We further recommend that the foreman raise the stores off the ground on sills or logs.

As applicable to both gangs, we recommend to the commissioners:

Pay the county physician for, and require him to, make a physical examination of each convict within 48 hours of commitment, unless this has been done previously in the jail, to vaccinate against small-pox when indicated, and to make weekly inspections of the convicts' quarters and food. Send tubercular prisoners to the penitentiary. Keep in the supervisor's office and at camp a set of records of the men, showing name, race, age, date of commitment, length of term, and when and why discharged. Give the men wheat bread once each day and fresh meat or fish three times a week.

State Board of Charities and Corrections.

By Albert S. Johnstone, Sec.  
Laurens County Jail.

Sheriff S. C. Reid, jailer. Visited March 5, 1918, by Secretary Johnstone and Assistant Secretary Broyles, with Rev. W. S. Holmes and Sheriff Reid. Inmates present, 3 negro males. Average population for the two and a half years ending December 31, 1917, 9.1.

The total score of this jail last year was 563 points out of a possible 1,000 but on this inspection only 538 points were allowed. The difference is due largely to the small attention being paid by the sheriff to keeping the prisoners' quarters in proper condition and to enforcing personal hygiene among his prisoners. We recommend that the sheriff have the steel cell work mopped off weekly, the floors sprinkled with a wet sawdust and swept daily, and the bathtub and toilet bowls kept cleaner; have each new prisoner bathe upon entrance and regularly once a week thereafter as long as he remains a prisoner, washing and putting on clean underclothing accordingly; have those infected anointed with a vermicide; take more precautions against the spread of venereal disease by seeing that all infected prisoners have and use separate bedding, eating utensils, and drink-cups; stop all forms of "kangaroo court", that is, initiation of new pris-

oners by their fellow prisoners in the jail.

The county should furnish each new prisoner with clean jail clothes, for which we recommend overalls as they can be washed and used again. We regret that the prisoners are given only two meals a day instead of three as we have recommended. Such, however, is to be expected under the time-worn, unbusinesslike fee system that still obtains in Laurens county, though it has been abolished in whole or in part in nine counties with satisfactory results.

We recommend that the county com-

missioners provide the jail with the same grade of medical service the almshouse superintendent reports as given to that institution. This medical service should include examination by the county physician of each prisoner within 24 hours of commitment, vaccination against small-pox where indicated, and weekly inspections of the prisoners' quarters and food—and for these services the physician should be paid an adequate salary. If any prisoner has tuberculosis he should be sent within three days after diagnosis to the tuberculosis hospital at the state penitentiary, where, at a

cost to the county of thirty cents a day he will be kept and given medical attention.

Since a new jail is to be built, we do not point out defects in the present plant.

State Board of Charities and Corrections.

By Albert S. Johnstone, Sec.

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