

SENATE.....No. 93.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, March 22, A. D. 1848.

The Joint Standing Committee on Prisons, to whom were referred the reports of the officers of the Massachusetts State Prison, for the year ending on the 30th of September, A. D. 1847, have attended to the duty assigned them, and respectfully ask leave to submit the following

R E P O R T :

Your committee visited the state prison on the 2d, and again on the 9th day of February last, and carefully examined all the departments of that institution, and made many inquiries relative to its internal arrangements. They are gratified in being able to state that the general appearance of the prison, the cheerfulness and industry of the convicts, and the provisions made for their comfort and reformation, were highly satisfactory to your committee, as well as creditable to those intrusted with the welfare of this institution.

There are some things in the report of the warden, which appear to claim from us more than ordinary attention.

Among these, are the building of a brick wall, to cover the line of the prison premises on Austin Street, and a block of

dwelling-houses on the prison lands, for the accommodation of the officers of the prison.

There is now, on the line of the prison property on Austin Street, a dilapidated picket-fence, which will hardly sustain itself, and is not in keeping with an institution of this character. This fence, your committee are of opinion, should be removed at once, and, in its place, there should be built a substantial brick wall of suitable height, with a granite capping on the same; the cost of which would amount to the sum of about six thousand dollars, and, when finished, would give the appearance of strength to the prison, and of beauty to this great thoroughfare in the rapidly-growing city of Charlestown.

It is a matter of some surprise that this subject has not arrested the attention of former committees, for your committee find, that the external appearance of the prison at Charlestown, is in no way in keeping with its internal appearance, and is much inferior to that of similar institutions in other states.

The proposed block of dwelling-houses would occupy a portion of this line on Austin Street, and your committee are of the unanimous opinion, that the welfare of the prison would be promoted by the erection of said block for the accommodation of the officers of this institution.

There are twenty-three officers attached to the prison, and the law provides that, of this number, the warden and deputy-warden shall each be furnished with a house, and required to reside within the precincts of the prison. Most of the other officers have families, and they are unable to procure places of residence so near the prison as is desirable; consequently, much inconvenience is suffered, and not unfrequently some danger incurred, from the unavoidable absence of the officers, which absence is protracted by the distance they are compelled to go for tenements suited to their wants and means.

It must be apparent to every person, that, in case of emergency, it is desirable that every officer should be upon the ground, or where he can be reached at a moment's notice. This is not, nor can it be the case, while the officers are obliged to seek in all directions for suitable places for their residence.

These houses can be leased to the officers at as low a rate as

they can hire elsewhere, and thus afford a suitable income for the amount expended for this improvement.

The dwelling-houses would occupy most of the line on Austin Street, upon which it is necessary to erect the brick wall in place of the present decayed fence; consequently, the expense of that portion of the wall should go toward the cost of erecting the houses; and your committee, therefore, have thought it highly reasonable, that a sum equal to the estimated cost of the erection of said wall, should be appropriated from the treasury of the Commonwealth; and as the erection of this block of buildings will necessarily involve the removal of the warden's house, your committee have thought proper to recommend the appropriation of the sum of two thousand dollars, together with the materials of the building now occupied by the warden, and the one adjoining thereto, for the reconstruction of a house for him in said block, and, upon inquiry, we learn, that the funds of the prison will admit of such an appropriation.

The balance of the funds for the erection of said block of buildings, not exceeding the sum of twenty thousand dollars, your committee have thought advisable to loan to the prison, from the treasury of the Commonwealth; requiring the rents from said houses to be paid by the warden of said prison, in semi-annual payments, into the treasury of the Commonwealth, until the whole sum loaned, together with interest thereon, shall be paid in full; being well convinced, from careful inquiry, that the rent will pay an interest, equal to at least ten per cent., upon the amount loaned for the above purpose.

As the prison estate has been so much enlarged, by the filling up of a portion of the flats adjoining thereto, the land taken for this improvement would not subject the prison to any inconvenience for wharf-room, that being abundant for all present purposes, and could be easily enlarged by filling up more flats, if the future wants of the institution should require it.

Your committee have carefully considered this subject, together with its relation to the character and best interests of the prison, and its merits have strengthened their convictions, that the erection of said wall and buildings is expedient and necessary, and that this improvement will be no less advantageous to

the welfare of the prison, than it will be creditable to the character which this Commonwealth sustains for the judicious provision it makes for its public institutions.

Therefore, your committee earnestly urge upon the legislature the passage of the annexed Resolves.

TRUMAN CLARKE, *Chairman.*

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty-Eight.

RESOLVES

Concerning the State Prison.

Resolved, That the warden of the Massachusetts State Prison be, and is hereby, authorized to erect a block of eleven dwelling-houses, upon the prison premises, together with a suitable brick wall, with hammered granite capping to the same, at each end of said houses, to cover the whole line of the prison lands on Austin Street in the city of Charlestown, in conformity to a plan of said houses, submitted for the examination and approval of the legislative committee on prisons.

Resolved, That, for the purpose of defraying the expense of erecting said wall and block of dwelling-houses authorized by the foregoing resolve, the sum of thirty thousand dollars be appropriated in the following manner, to wit: Two thousand dollars shall be appropriated from the prison treasury, which sum, together with the materials in the dwelling-house now occupied by the warden, and the building adjoining the same, shall constitute a fund for erecting a house in said block for the warden; (it being necessary to remove the warden's house, in order to make room for the erection of said block;) six thousand dollars shall be appropriated and paid, from the treasury of the Commonwealth, for the purpose of erecting said brick wall on the whole line of the prison premises on Austin Street; and the

balance of the thirty thousand dollars, to complete the erection of said block of dwelling-houses, shall be loaned to the prison from the treasury of the Commonwealth; and when said houses are finished, they shall be occupied by the officers of the prison, who, for the use thereof, shall pay into the hands of the warden, in quarterly payments, a reasonable sum for the rent of the houses occupied by them; the amount of said rent to be determined by the warden and inspectors of said prison, which rent shall be in proportion to the rent of similar tenements in the vicinity of said prison; and all the rent so received by the warden, shall be paid by him into the treasury of the Commonwealth, in semi-annual payments, until full payment for the aforesaid loan, together with the interest on the same, shall be made to the treasury of the Commonwealth.