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INVESTMENT IN ALMSHOUSES

OUR COUNTY HOMES

The Cost of American Almshouses is the title of an interesting bulletin recently issued by the United States Department of Labor. The table which appears elsewhere shows how the states rank in the value of almshouse property per inmate for 1923 and 1924 when the data were being collected. South Dakota enjoys the distinction of first place with \$5,601 worth of property per inmate in almshouses in the state. Mississippi ranks last with county-home property valued at \$416 per inmate.

North Carolina ranks twentieth, which is rather surprising to us in view of what we have seen and heard of county homes or "poor houses" in North Carolina. Our reaction is not to boast of North Carolina's rank, but to pity the conditions which must prevail in many of the states that rank below ours.

The almshouses or county homes in North Carolina number ninety-seven. Five of these homes reported no inmates. The 92 homes with inmates reported a total of 1,784 inmates. The value of all county-home property in North Carolina was reported as totalling \$3,313,194, or an average property value of \$1,857 per inmate.

Shacks and Palaces

County homes in North Carolina include every type and condition of building, from wretched shacks unfit for human habitation to creditable plants, some of which are rather palatial. "A number of counties have the cottage system. The typical institution of this class consists of a group of two-room wooden buildings. A few homes built on this plan have brick cottages. The tendency is away from this type of institution. The newer homes consist of one building or a group of connected buildings, usually of brick. Thirty counties each have buildings valued at \$15,000 or more. Eleven of these each have buildings valued at \$40,000 or more. Some of the better buildings, however, were poorly planned. Few of them, in fact, show evidences of having been planned by one who had any definite conception of the problems presented by the county home. There is rarely adequate provision for the segregation of sexes. There is not always complete separation of the races. Nine counties report hospitals or infirmary wards for the care of the sick. Two of these, however, are not equipped; one is not ordinarily used; and another is now being used as living quarters for inmates. We have yet to see such a ward adequately equipped.

"The furnishings in general are of the crudest sort. A cheap bed—usually a double bed—a chair, sometimes a table; these are the typical furnishings of a room in a county home. Such luxuries as closets, bureaus, or mirrors in the rooms of the inmates are unknown in many county homes."

On a County Basis

The care of the poor is purely a county affair in North Carolina, as well as in most other states. In a few counties the poor are provided for in an intelligent and humane way. In many counties of the state the care of the poor and afflicted is nothing short of a disgrace to those counties, and to the people of the state who condone such inhumane provision. Special Bulletin Number Four, Poor Relief in North Carolina, issued by the State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, presents in a graphic and photographic way the conditions found in an exhaustive study of the county homes of the state. At this time we are interested in the physical properties themselves. Next week we will present a study concerning the care of inmates, the cost, and constructive suggestions.

Pride Running Wild

While the conditions in many counties are bad beyond description, there are a score or so of counties which have recently built new and adequate homes for the care of their unfortunates. There are even a few counties that seem to have gone far beyond the dictates of reason in providing county homes. One county has just completed a county home the cost of which approaches \$200,000. In its old home there were fewer than twenty inmates. The present home is the show place of the county, representing an investment in

the building alone of more than six thousand dollars per inmate! This county has gone from one extreme to the other. Another county has just completed a hundred-thousand-dollar home, which houses an average of 25 to 30 inmates! In another county the home being built will cost more than one hundred thousand dollars, while in another the home represents an investment of nearly one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. These figures do not include the value of land and other property.

Some counties take absolutely no pride in the care of the poor. In other counties it looks as if county pride is running wild. Reason has been discarded.

The Unit Too Small

The main trouble with county homes is that the average establishment is too small to permit proper care of the inmates. Twenty-nine homes have only from one to ten inmates each, and 42 homes have from 11 to 25 inmates. The unit is too small from every point of view—for efficiency in operation and management, for adequate medical care and supervision, and so on and on. The small homes are very expensive to operate on a per inmate basis, and very ineffective in so far as the care of inmates is concerned. The sensible thing it seems would be for sparsely settled neighboring counties to combine and erect a county-group home, and care for their poor on a cooperative basis. The legislature of 1923 provided for two or more counties to combine in erecting a county-group home. So far no group of counties has shown any tendency to use this very sensible law. County individualism has the upper hand. Each cooperating county insists on having the home within its borders, as if it really were a matter of life and death.

Opportunity Disappearing

Instead of making use of a very sensible law many counties have recently erected brand new poor houses of their own. New ones are being planned, and an opportunity for the law to become effective is rapidly growing more and more remote.

The following case may be a little extreme but it is illustrative of the inefficiency with which we often manage our county affairs—the utter lack of reason and common-sense often exhibited. One county provides a one-hundred-acre farm, a county home, hires a keeper whose family live with him at the expense of the county—for what purpose? to care for the single inmate in the county poor house, a crazy, blind negro who ought to be in the insane asylum, or at Pinehurst where it would be good economy to give him a room in a hotel with bath and board. Another great agricultural county spends \$1,141.32 per inmate per year to maintain the inmates in her county home, and the amount does not include the value of products furnished by the farm.

Of all activities engaged in by the people of this state, generally speaking, we believe the care of the poor is both the most inefficient and the most unscientific. In a few counties the homes are praiseworthy, but such homes are exceptional. We have far to go in North Carolina before poor relief will be conducted in an efficient and scientific manner. In this particular we have benefited very little from the experience of other states and nations.

INCREASING PROSPERITY

Southern railroads are more prosperous as a whole than those of any other section, and far greater expansion of Southern and Southwestern roads is under way than in any other part of the country. Steamship lines between the North Atlantic and the South Atlantic and Gulf ports are increasing their facilities at a rapid rate. New lines are being established and old lines are doubling and trebling their transportation facilities.

Hydro-electric developments are under way in the South on a larger scale than anywhere else in the United States, and the demand for power and light increases so rapidly that these companies find it difficult to keep up a supply equal to the growing needs of the South.

New enterprises of great "pith and moment" are being developed throughout the entire territory from Maryland to Texas. New highways are under construction involving hundreds of mil-

THE CENTER OF LIFE

In America at least the home is the most important of all institutions. From it are issues of life. In the little world of the home, children are born and reared. In it they grow to manhood and womanhood. From it they go forth into the larger world of society and state, to establish in turn their own little world of the home in which they grow old and die. Their memories linger around the homes of their childhood; the memories held by later generations are associated with the homes of their manhood and womanhood. In the home children receive the most important part of their education. In the home must be established their physical, mental, and moral education.

From the home parents and their children go forth to their daily toil, and to the home they bring the products or the earnings of their labor, to be expended, wisely and prudently or unwisely and imprudently, for food, clothing, shelter, and the other necessities and luxuries of life. For most people the home is the beginning and end of life. All their activities proceed from it and return to it.

Therefore, of all the arts those pertaining to home making are the most important and of all the sciences those which find their application in the home, making us intelligent about the home and its needs, are the most significant.—Dr. P. P. Claxton.

tions of dollars. Like the railroads and steamship lines, traffic over them is increasing at an unprecedented rate. Indeed, one writer recently said that the highways leading from the West to the South are black with automobiles southward bound.

The increasing prosperity of the South is enabling its people to become heavy investors in hydro-electric companies, in industrial enterprises and in all other interests which in the past have to a large extent been compelled to depend for capital upon eastern and western financial centers. Publicity of many kinds by cities and states, publicity through the newspapers and magazines and expositions, is on a new and larger scale than ever before known in the South.

Suggestive of the value of this publicity is the statement published in this issue that one Florida town, because of a small exhibit at the Southern Exposition, has already received as a direct result \$5,000,000 in investments in that community. Near an east Tennessee city, which was also represented at the Exposition, and which made for itself a name and a fame by reason of its activity, a site has been selected for a rayon enterprise to represent an ultimate investment of \$10,000,000. Whether or not this case is a direct result of the Exposition we cannot say, but we do know that every bit of publicity at the Southern Exposition and in the broad advertising campaigns which the whole South is now beginning to put forward means a concentration upon this section of the thought of millions of people who never before seriously studied the potentialities of the South.

Will this development be overdone? is a question many people are asking themselves without understanding the foundation on which the South is building. Its climatic advantages alone are of immeasurable value, and now that the world is beginning to realize that the South's climate means greater comfort and longer life than the rigorous climate of the North and West, millions will seek the South on that account alone. But with five times as much coal area as all of Europe outside of Russia, with vast stores of iron ore, with marbles, and granites, and phosphates, with great hydro-electric potentialities still awaiting development, with three-fifths of the seacoast of continental United States, with every variety of soil needed for every variety of agricultural product, what this section is doing at the present time is but the faintest indication of that glorious and glowing future which awaits this, the most Heaven-favored region on earth.—Manufacturers Record.

THE BUSINESS FARMER

The most serious cultural shortcoming of rural life in America is that it has developed no high ideals that are independent of the town, no culture to be set against that of the town, no attrac-

RURAL ELECTRIC POWER

X. USES OF POWER ON THE FARM

The first group of articles in this series dealing with electric power and the farm presented some facts about the generation of electricity and some hints about the installation of the most economical and efficient farm power systems. The News Letter of September 30 pointed out the rank of North Carolina among the states of the Union as to power development. It was shown that only four states rank above us in the general development of electric power, but on the other hand only four states are below us in the average primary horsepower used per farm. The next group of articles will deal with the uses of electricity on the farm, the amounts of power necessary for various apparatus, some facts on existing rural power lines, and some questions involved in financing present and future rural power lines. This article will concern itself with the uses of electricity on the farm.

Saves Back-Sweating

The almost magic transformation of farm life through the installation of an electric lighting system in houses, barns, and sheds is well known. But the better performance of farm tasks by the use of electric appliances and the saving of human labor and drudgery by these methods is even more important.

Here are some of the farm operations that can be done more quickly, more smoothly, and more precisely by the use of electric power than the most capable person could do them by the unaided use of back, leg, and arm muscles: Shredding and husking corn, filling silos, cutting and hoisting hay, grinding feed, pumping water, making ice, milking, separating cream, churning butter, sterilizing milk, sharpening tools on grindstone, sawing wood, cutting roots, blowing forges, operating lathes, operating cider mills, mixing concrete, and many other operations. Then there are some special uses of electricity in the egg-raising business, in matters of lighting poultry houses and in incubating and brooding.

tiveness that will be clung to in youth and old age in preference to what the town has to offer. In material aspects, American agriculture has been a success; in higher things, it has been a failure, and an almost unqualified failure. Its traditional showing is the little red schoolhouse, wrecked in equipment and attainment; the old swimming hole, often

Gives Home Comforts

But that is only one side of farm life. What about the household tasks, the unending round of duties to which the farmer's wife is subjected? Here are some of the household servants that electric power can provide for: Water pump, range, dish washer, washing machine, wringer, vacuum cleaner, flat-iron, sewing-machine motor, fan, dough or batter mixing machine, toaster, percolator, ice-cream freezer, ice machine, and other appliances.

Some Advantages

Some of the advantages of the electric motor over other forms of farm power are given by the United States Department of Agriculture as follows: (1) Its extreme convenience in operation. (2) It requires little attention when in use. (3) It requires practically no attention when not in use. (4) It has considerable overload capacity. (5) It is adapted to practically all kinds of belt work and is especially adapted to direct-coupled power installations. (6) Electricity may be used for heating and lighting as well as power.

Some of the disadvantages mentioned are that electricity is expensive to distribute from central plants in small units of power and that it is difficult to apply directly to draft or field work. Concerning the first disadvantage we will have more to say in a later article. About the difficulty of use in draft or field work, it is interesting to know that a few electrically driven threshing machines are in use, and that even an electric plow has been used in Sweden, although it is still in an experimental stage.

Little has been said here about electric lighting on the farm. But a recent experiment done on a farm in Wisconsin ought to be of interest. The time used in doing chores was cut down 35 percent simply by working by electric light rather than by lantern light.—A. T. Cutler.

INVESTMENT IN ALMSHOUSES PER INMATE, 1923-24

Includes Land, Buildings and All Equipment

In the following table, based on a recent report The Cost of American Almshouses issued by the United States Department of Labor, the states are ranked according to the value of property per inmate in almshouses. The study includes land and farm equipment, buildings, and furnishings.

South Dakota leads with an average investment per inmate of \$5,601. Mississippi comes last with \$416.

North Carolina ranks 20th with an average property value per inmate of \$1,857. We have 97 almshouses, or county homes, with a property value of \$3,313,194. Three counties have no homes. Five county homes had no inmates. The 92 homes with inmates reported a total of 1,784 inmates. In many counties the homes are very comfortable while in many others they are unfit for humans to live in.

United States total for the 2,183 almshouses reporting inmates was 85,839 inmates, and a grand total property value of \$150,485,230, or \$1,762 per inmate. Department of Rural Social-Economics, University of North Carolina.

Rank	States	Investment per inmate	Rank	States	Investment per inmate
1	South Dakota	\$5,601	25	New Jersey	\$1,748
2	Nebraska	3,704	26	Maine	1,725
3	Wyoming	3,561	27	Ohio	1,655
4	Rhode Island	3,531	28	Pennsylvania	1,584
5	Maryland	3,172	29	Massachusetts	1,498
6	Iowa	2,926	30	Virginia	1,483
7	North Dakota	2,896	31	Florida	1,481
8	Delaware	2,612	32	Texas	1,472
9	Illinois	2,577	33	South Carolina	1,468
10	Utah	2,526	34	New Hampshire	1,445
11	Idaho	2,436	35	Nevada	1,401
12	Minnesota	2,351	36	Kentucky	1,326
13	West Virginia	2,321	37	Arizona	1,290
14	Connecticut	2,144	38	Tennessee	1,244
15	Missouri	2,093	39	California	1,145
16	Kansas	2,021	40	Michigan	1,140
17	Montana	1,921	41	Oregon	1,126
18	Indiana	1,911	42	Arkansas	1,089
19	Washington	1,946	43	Georgia	1,002
20	North Carolina	1,857	44	Colorado	748
21	Vermont	1,828	45	Alabama	574
22	Oklahoma	1,827	46	Louisiana	452
23	Wisconsin	1,826	47	Mississippi	416
24	New York	1,773		New Mexico	No report