

CHESTER TIMES – May 11, 1908

HOUSE OF REFUGE A MODEL SCHOOL – Reformatory Institution of a Fine Character Located at Glen Mills, Delaware County – Help Afforded the Boys

The Board of Managers of the House of Refuge make the eighth annual report with the proceedings at the meeting of the contributors, accounts of the treasurer, reports of the superintendents and visiting agents. This includes the boys' department at Glen Mills, this county, and the girls' department at Twenty-second and Poplar Streets, Philadelphia. While these institutions are reformatory in their character, it must be conceded that they have proven the making of many a man and woman who, started in early in life to lay the foundation to become criminals. In addition to being taught trades the inmates are given a good education and in a number of instances when boys and girls have reached the point that the officials have determined that they should be discharged they have begged to be allowed to remain until they had finished the particular trade or schooling which they were receiving.

The institutions have come to be looked upon as a good home for wayward boys and girls, in many instances made so by reason of the neglect of their parents. Many men and women who are good citizens today in many communities over the country, owe their success to the kindness of the teachers in these institutions, and the opportunity to secure an education. Hundreds of boys in this county alone who spend nights sleeping in soap boxes and other out of the way places along the streets of Chester and other parts of the county, have been turned out from Glen Mills good men. Favorable comment has often been made by the Judges of the Courts that it is a Godsend to have such places for boys and girls who were brought before them, after hearing of the neglect on the part of parents and guardians.

While it is not generally known, the boys and girls who leave these institutions are not left to the cold world without someone to look after them. This humane act at present as far as the Glen Mills place is concerned, is being attended to by the Rev. Charles S. Hamilton, who resides on South Avenue, in Media. He takes in part of the States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. His duty is to visit those who leave the Houses of Refuge and to ascertain how they are getting along. His reports keep the managers of the institutions in touch with former inmates for years after they are discharged. The criminal records show that but few of these boys and girls ever have their names recorded upon the calendars of the Courts of the county, showing the great influence which is exerted while they are inmates to teach them the value of a right living life.

The following will give some idea of the large number of boys and girls who are sent to these Refuges:

The total received from 1889 to December 31, 1908, was 26,640. Of this number 20,406 were boys and 6,234 girls; the number discharged by indenture or given up to friends from 1828 to December 31, 1906 was 25,784. Of this number 19,746 were boys and 6,038 girls. Remaining in the House, January 1, 1907 were 856; of this number 660 were boys and 196 girls. There was admitted during the year 1907, 613 boys and 205 girls. This made an increase in the average for the year 1907 of 13 boys and 66 girls.

The average age of boys admitted was 13 years and 10 months; of girls, 14 years and 11 months. Average time of detention of boys one year and ten months; of girls, two years.

Chairman James V. W. Watson of the Board of Managers, says:

There is still room at the Glen Mills School for at least 100 more boys than those who are now receiving the great advantage afforded them by the trade and elementary schools. The boys are under the supervision of large committees and teachers of ability, with capacity for instructing wayward and neglected children, and are now living in cottage homes under the care of competent women, who provide them with everything necessary for their comfort and improvement.

“This great Institution and school is under the control of F.H. Nibecker, superintendent, a gentleman of large experience, with marked ability for training erring children, who has every facility for their needed improvement in morals and learning, which their former lives have denied them.

“The boys living at Glen Mills are allowed all the privileges of boys elsewhere; they have their sports and games, holidays, and athletics, all of which boys delight in and are happy in the enjoyment of them, as boys always are.

“The workings of the Trade Schools at Glen Mills are all that was hoped from them when they were established. The boys even in the short time they are with us, acquire the use of tools and such proficiency in their trades as to enable them easily to get work at fair wages when they leave the house, thus making this branch of our work a most beneficent one.

“The large farm of over 500 acres, under high cultivation, is very productive and by the boys’ labor produces food and fruits of the best and most wholesome kind, and also affords them knowledge of agriculture, most valuable to those boys who come to us from the country district. This part of the work at Glen Mills is very helpful.

“The Girls’ department in the city is under the care of Mrs. Martha P. Falconer, superintendent, a lady of large experience and ability, who, aided by the Ladies’ Committee and one from the Board working conjointly, has changed the conditions in that department. It has been greatly enlarged by the Juvenile Court, that has sent large numbers of older girls taxing the capacity of the house and making it necessary, in order to provide quarters for them, to send many to the farm in Delaware County – donated by our generous colleague. Alfred C. Harrison – where they are now living. This change has, of course, increased the expenses of maintenance of every kind, which will be accounted for by the treasurer in his report to the Board. The general superintendence of the house and the schools, and the educational work of the girls, has been satisfactory to the Board; but it is felt by many that the large change in population is undesirable, under present conditions.

In both departments the Ladies’ Committee have been of great assistance to the superintendents, in looking after the domestic affairs, and we feel under great obligations to them.”

Situated on one of the highest knolls in Delaware County, no more beautiful spot could have been selected for the erection of the fine buildings which mark the home of this institution. Everything is marked with the great care which has been exercised the comfort of the inmates. All of the buildings are connected by underground tunnels so that during bad weather the inmates can reach the school rooms and workshops without being subjected to the elements. The place can boast of one of the finest gymnasiums in this section of the country and some very fine exhibitions are given by the boys. A competent instructor is always present and thousands of persons each year wand their way to Glen Mills to witness these exhibitions and to see the drills on the campus. Each month a flag is presented to the boys of the cottage receiving the highest mark for drills and this arouses

great competition among the boys. They are said to be the best drilled lads of any State institution in this section of the country.

One of the interesting features of the place is the farm. This is worked exclusively by the boys under the direction of a competent tiller of the soil, and many first-class farmers are turned out. The following will give a correct idea of what was done in this line during the year 1907; 43,903 quarts of milk; 26,002 pounds of beef; 13,219 pounds of pork, 12,605 pounds of mutton, 377 pounds of poultry; 1,171 dozens of eggs; 741 pounds of veal; 1,621 boxes of strawberries; 100 boxes of red raspberries; 275 baskets of apples; 19 baskets of pears; 15 baskets of plums; 3,200 pounds of grapes; 903 bushels of onions; 229 bushels of beets; 52 baskets of okra; 1,520 watermelons; 900 pumpkins; 39 baskets of summer squash; 164 tons of timothy hay; 2,450 bundles of corn fodder; 40 tons of wheat straw; 900 bushels of carrots; 695 bunches of asparagus; 14,613 bunches of scallions; 34,794 bunches of rhubarb; 4,876 bunches of radishes; 64 baskets of spinach; 348 baskets of lettuce; 131 baskets of turnips, 1,500 bushels of turnips; 3,907 bushels of potatoes; 1,848 baskets of tomatoes; 487 baskets of string beans; 202 baskets of peas, 4,657 cucumbers; 25,450 ears of sugar corn; 1,250 bunches of beets; 2732 baskets of cantaloupes; 2,329 winter squash; 350 baskets lima beans; 16,517 heads of cabbage; 50 tons of clover hay; 900 bushels of wheat; 3500 bushels of field corn; 46 tons of mangle Wurzel beets.

The industrial part of the institution includes a school of painting, laundry, tailor shop, bakery, printing office, sewing room, carpenter shop, engineers' department, blacksmith shop, and shoe shop.

A number of Delaware County people take a great interest in the school at Glen Mills and never fail to be present at the services in the handsome chapel in the afternoon to witness the drills of the beautiful campus. The list of Board of Managers contains the names of Col. J.W. Hawley of Media and George M. Booth, Esq. of Chester, both prominent bankers.

KEITH LOCKHART COLLECTION