NEW JERSEY STATE ARCHIVES

NEW JERSEY STATE ARCHIVES COLLECTION GUIDE

Record Group: Soldiers' Children's Home of New Jersey
Series: Administrative Records, 1865-1877
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Institutional History

The Soldiers' Children's Home of New Jersey wa first established by an association of prominent Jersey City women in January 1865, with the object of providing support for the destitute children of New Jersey Civil War veterans. It immediately became apparent, however, that supporting the large number of needy children would far exceed the means of the association. Consequently, an appeal for support to the state legislature resulted, first, in the incorporation of the Jersey City association as a body politic on 23 March 1865 under the name of "The Soldiers' Children's Home." The charter authorized the corporation to receive under its care any minor child of any soldier if placed in its charge by a parent or legal guardian, and granted the home the same legal rights over such children as would be held by their parents.

With the decision of the managers to locate the Children's Home in Trenton, the institution was given $5,000 in state aid by an act of the legislature two weeks after the charter. Later the same year, the home received an $8,000 donation from the Camden and Amboy Railroad, out of the balance of the company's $30,000 contribution to the state in 1863 for promoting the raising of volunteer soldiers.

In Trenton, the home found temporary quarters first in Millham, and then at 92 Warren Street. In March 1866, the legislature set up a commission to choose a permanent location for the Soldiers' Children's Home, with costs not to exceed $10,000 for the land and $20,000 for construction. This act also provided the home with ongoing monetary support in the amount of $37.50 per child, quarterly, for a period of ten successive years. The location selected by the commission was at Hamilton and Chestnut Avenues; construction was completed in January 1867. The two-story, brick building was described by Raum as "exceedingly plain in its external appearance," but with spacious and well-arranged school rooms, dining rooms, dormitories, and play rooms. From 1865 to 1876, the Soldiers' Children's Home cared for and educated over three hundred boys and girls. Children could remain at the home until the age of sixteen, at which time they were dismissed. At termination of its ten-year funding in March 1876, the institution still supported seventy-five children (for whom the managers found homes or suitable situations). With the closing on March 7th, the managers were authorized to distribute the home's bedding to the destitute, and the building was turned over to the governor. In 1882, the site became the "New Jersey Institution for the Deaf and Dumb."

Many of the managers of the Soldiers' Children's Home served the institution and the state without pay from the establishment of the home in 1865 to its closing. In addition to several vice presidents and directors, those perhaps of special note were the following four Trenton women who served as officers: Margaret E. Dayton (Mrs. W. L.), President, 1865-1876; Miss Mary A. Hall, Treasurer, 1865-1876; Miss Mary F. Johnston, Secretary, 1865-1870; and Miss Mary G. Abbott, Secretary, 1870-1876. A joint resolution of thanks was passed by the legislature on 6 April 1876 citing that the home had been "successful in accomplishing so much good, the success of which has been largely due to the able and judicious management, and great care exercised by the late officers of the home, who

have given their time, and without pay, fee, or hope of reward, used much self-denial, untiring and unselfish in their devotion for the welfare of the children connected with the home, and have sought, also, the best interest of the state." The 1876 joint legislative committee on the home also reported that "for ten years these devoted Christian women have given their time and attention to this labor of love for these children, and this work will no doubt meet the approval of all good people of the State."

Bibliography

Annual Reports of the Directors of the Soldiers' Children's Home of the State of New Jersey.

Laws of New Jersey, 1865, Chap. CCXCIII, pp. 551-552, and Chap DIX, p. 949.

Laws of New Jersey, 1866, Chap. C, pp. 249-51.

Laws of New Jersey, 1876, Chap. LXXI, p. 86, and Joint Resolution Number III, pp. 419-420.

Raum, John O. History of the City of Trenton, New Jersey... Trenton, NJ: W. T. Nicholson & Co., Printers, 1871. pp. 386-388.

Report of the Committee appointed by His Excellency Gov. Parker to Inquire into the Condition of the Soldiers' Children's Home of New Jersey.1872.

Report of Joint Committee on Soldiers' Children's Home. 1876.

Report of Commissioners to Improve and Extend the Soldiers' Children's Home of the State of New Jersey. 1868.

Trenton Historical Society. A History of Trenton, 1679-1929..., Volume Two. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1929. pp. 689-690, 748.

Content Note

The administrative records of the Soldiers' Children's Home were received by the Archives from the Department of Defense. They consist primarily of minutes of the board of directors, and accounting records kept by Miss Mary A. Hall, Treasurer. It should be noted that the second volume of board minutes includes reports of the "Committee of Admission and Dismission," which contain lists of inmates. The documents filed as items #16a-o (in Box #5) are engraved soldiers' service certificates (which include a view of the home), possibly presented to children upon "graduation." It is not known why these certificates have survived along with the administrative records; it is likely that the 16 items were flawed copies, redone for presentation. Finally, photocopied annual reports, legislative committee reports, and research materials have also been added to this series as files #1-3.

Contents

Box 1

1. Research materials.
2. Annual Reports of the Board of Directors for the years 1865-1867 & 1869-1876 [photocopies, 11 items].
3. Legislative committee reports, 1868, 1872 & 1876 [photocopies, 3 items].
4. Constitution and By-Laws of the Home for Soldier's Children of New Jersey, (printed), 1866.
5. Minutes of the Board of Directors, kept by Mrs. James C. Carlisle, Miss Mary F. Johnston and Miss Mary G. Abbott, Secretaries, 1865-1876 [3 vols. (1 disbound)]:
   a) 16 January 1865 - 5 June 1867 (includes approval of Constitution)
   b) 1 July 1867 - 5 June 1871

c) 3 July 1871 - 6 March 1876

6. List of children entered which includes child's name, parents name and regiment, undated.

7. Account of Miss Mary A. Hall, Assistant Treasurer, 23 May 1865 - 6 November 1865.

Box 2

8. Financial ledger, 23 November 1865 - 1 June 1876.

9. Day book, 23 November 1865 - 1 June 1876.

10. Receipt book, 25 November 1865 - 27 February 1867.

11. Loose receipts and bills, 1869-1870 [part]:
    a) No date [2 items]
    b) November-December 1869 [24 items]
    c) January-March 1870 [36 items]
    d) April-June 1870 [41 items]
    e) July-September 1870 [48 items]

Box 3

11. Loose receipts and bills, 1870 and 1872-1874 [cont'd]:
    f) October-December 1870 [11 items]
    g) 1872 [28 items]
    h) January-March 1873 [18 items]
    i) April-June 1873 [25 items]
    j) July-September 1873 [25 items]
    k) October-December 1873 [33 items]
    l) January-March 1874 [29 items]
    m) April-June 1874 [40 items]
    n) July-September 1874 [30 items]
    o) October-December 1874 [20 items]

12. Treasurer's reports, 1869-1870 [14 items].

Box 4 (oversize)

13. Ledger with Record of Admissions, 23 March 1865 - 16 April 1876.

14. Ledger with Record of Admissions, 23 March 1865 - 16 April 1876.

15. Financial ledger, 1865-1866.

Box 5 (oversize)

16. Soldier's service certificates, 1875-1877, for:
    a) Anderson, Joseph, son of Samuel B. Anderson, Private, Company E, 5th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875 [incomplete].

b) Conley, William, son of James Conley, Private, Company B, 1st Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875.

c) Dorus, Francis, son of Peter Dorus, Private, Company G, U.S. Volunteer Colored Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875.

d) Downs, Sidney, son of John Downs, Corporal, Company B, 35th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875.

e) Lake, Thomas, son of John T. Lake, Private, Company I, 26th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875.

f) Longstreet, Kate, daughter of John Longstreet, Private, Company H, 23rd Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875.

g) McDaniels, William L., son of William McDaniels, Company B, 12th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875.

h) McManus, John, son of John McManus, Private, Company D, 4th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875 [incomplete].

i) [---, child of] Jacob Messenger, Private, Company B, 11th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875 [incomplete].

j) [---, child of] Caleb J. Morton, Private, Company H, 15th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875 [2 items, incomplete].

k) Rounds, Stewart, son of John Rounds, Sergeant, Company B, 24th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 3 March 1876.

l) Ryan, Emma L., daughter of Christopher Ryan, Private, Company B, 4th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875.

m) [---, child of] Abraham L. Snyder, Private, Company E, 35th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875 [incomplete].

n) Stock, Matilda, daughter of Jacob Stock, Private, Company D, 34th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 March 1877 [incomplete].

o) Thompson, William H., son of William Thompson, Private, Company G, 8th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Trenton, 22 February 1875.

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