

OVERSEERS REPORTS

1790

To the hon^{ble} General Afsembly of the State of Connecticut now convened at New Haven.-

The Overseers of New Gate prison beg leave, by way of report, to reprefent to your Honours, that they have erected a building over the Shaft that communicates with the caverns heretofore improved for a prison, of forty feet in length from east to west, and thirty feet in width, seventeen feet of the area meafuring from the west end and the whole width thereof is surrounded with a stone wall, two feet thick, built with hewn stone, of a square foot at the end, and generally of six or eight feet in height, the wall consists of two tier or courfes of these Stones, laid side by side, so as to break joints, and the Stones in each of the courfes are bound together with cramps of Iron, each about ten inches long, bent nearly at right angles at each end, and forming cranks of about three inches long, which are drove into holes bored for that purpose, on the top of the courses also all the stones in the different courses are bound together crofswise of the wall, with similar cramps, this wall is carried about seven feet high, and the whole is built on a stone floor which covers the whole area, surrounded with this wall, and consists of Stone about two feet and an half or three feet Square, and about ten Inches thick, hewn smooth on the top, and squared so as to form joints, and are dowelled together on each of their sides. - This area is divided into two apartments by a wall built in like manner, the largest on the South side may be called the invalid room, being designed to accommodate the prisoners when sick and unable to labour, and the smallest on the north side may be called the pafsage room, it containing the mouth of the Shaft, and communicating with the guard room above by means of a trap door or gate, thro which the prisoners must pafs; upon the mouth of the shaft will be placed a heavy gate sheathed with iron and secured to the stone floor with iron bars.

Under all the east end of the House being 23 feet in length is a cellar, the wall of which is carried to the same heighth with the Stone prison just discribed, being dug out of the side hill, which ascends toward the east, and upon the whole of this wall is is erected a story of brick, and is divided into four apartments, one at the west end over the Stone prison and of the same bignefs, with both

apartments for the guard a large Room at the south east part of the House, and at the northeast a large Bedroom and Buttery to accommodate the prison keeper and his Family; when the prisoners are taken out of the caverns they are taken up the shaft which is nearly 30 feet deep, thro' the great gate, into the passage room, and from thence thro' the trap door into the guard room above, and if it is necessary to put things down into the guard invalid room, they must be let down thro another trap door inserted also in the floor of the Guard Room, the floor over both apartments of the Stone prison is formed of timbers of about 8 Inches square, lying contiguous to each other, planked underneath, and in the Invalid room, where they must have fire, sheathed with plate Iron, two small apertures in this room and one in the passage room are left in the wall secured by grates - a small fire place is to be built in the invalid room which runs up thro' the floor and communicates with the main stack of Chimneys, and in the opening of the floor, are inserted bars of Iron which would prevent an escape, should they pull down the fireplace, the roof is compleated, but neither the Gates, nor the chimneys nor the inside work is done.

The Overseers have also buit a work house of brick forty feet long and thirty feet wide, at the northeast corner of the yard, forming a square with the end of the prison House, but distant from it north, about twelve feet, with a door in the middle, and ten windows in the walls of about 18 inches square, three forges may be built at each end, and two the north Side, which will be sufficient to accommodate thirty two hands and an open space within the door will be left, for the centry and instructor to walk uninterrupted - the roof is raised but not covered, nor are the forges built.

These Buildings with a plot of ground about 9 rods east and west, and 7 rods north and south, which contains the well and the mouths of all the old Shafts, except the horizontal one called the level, which opens near the bottom of the hill, are inclosed with a picket constructed as follows; Posts of white oak timber ten inches square and eleven feet long are framed into the center of crofs sills of the same bignefts and length, 3 Girders of about 7 inches square and 11 feet long are framed from one post to another - Braces are framed into the crofs sills and posts on the outside and knees being natural

crooks at right angles are spiked on the inside, and two inch white oak plank 11 feet long are spiked on to the Girders, and upon the top of the upper Girders are drove in Iron Spikes about about five inches long, and about three inches apart all around the pickets. - in front is a large Gate wide enough for Carts and other carriages to pass, including in one of the leaves, a small Gate for common use. - the picket is nearly compleated. The old works in the caverns being rotten, it was necessary to remove the rubbish, and two new rooms are built, the first but a few paces from the bottom of the Shaft is sufficient to accommodate about a dozen prisoners, the other still lower down is built upon a steep descent, and the floor is built by steps, which form convenient seats to sit on, or bunks to sleep on, the room is sufficient to accommodate upwards of 20 prisoners and both will serve to keep the prisoners dry from the continual droppings from the rock. -

It will be necessary to erect a coal house large enough to contain about 4000 Bushels of Coal, the cost of which will be about £20 -

The well which communicates with the Caverns, the shaft of which being about 70 feet deep, 50 of which is in the rock, was formerly stopped up by inserting iron bars across the top of the rock, and filling the space above with Stones, the design at present is to secure it, in such a manner, as to admit a freer circulation of air in the caverns to improve it still as a well for the use of the prison, and yet to prevent escapes by means of which may be done also for about £20 -

About £280 - of the sum the Overseers were authorized to draw out of the Treasury, remains to compleat the Buildings, and which it is hoped will be sufficient for that purpose, and it is expected that the Buildings will be completed in about four weeks, so as the prisoners may be committed to the prison, and set to work, if the weather prove favourable. -

The Overseers have appointed Maj^r. Peter Curtifs of Farmington to be keeper of the prison, a person well qualified for that office, and who will be ambitious to distinguish himself as a faithful and vigilant officer, if the Overseers are not much deceived; he will undertake the trust if your Honours shall give him a reward which he shall judge adequate to a Situation of such

responsibility, on which must require constant vigilance and attention, and at the same time be attended with danger to himself from the efforts of men in a state of desperation.

The Overseers beg leave herewith to submit the instruction of your Honours, some Rules and regulations which they think necessary for the government of the prison, and on which they beg leave to remark, that their authority to make rules is by the wording of the act of Assembly, limited to the subject of governing and punishing the prisoners, they can have no right to make rules for the Government and punishment of the guard, except by implication, as a necessary means of governing the prisoners, the same holds true respecting strangers or Spectators, should your Honours judge it necessary that such Regulations should be made, and that the Power of the Overseers (extends) clearly to those objects, your Honours will pursue, such measures in order thereto as your wisdom shall direct. -

All which is submitted to your Honours by your Honours
most obed^t hum^{bl} Servants

John Treadwill
Roger Newberry
Pliny Hillyer

Overseers of
Newgate Prison.

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CONN ARCHIVES
CTM SERIES 2
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