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THE CHARLESTON ORPHAN HOUSE, 1860-1876

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One of the results of war is that many of the social problems found in peacetime are exaggerated to such an extent that social consciousness is stirred to provide a remedy. Such was the case in the founding of the Charleston Orphan House, the oldest municipally supported orphanage in the United States. In 1783 the City Council had been charged with the responsibility of caring for the orphans of the Charleston poor.¹ It was due primarily to John Robertson, a merchant, that this responsibility was met by the establishment of an institution which nurtured youths, some of whom developed into leaders of national prominence. Robertson at his own expense cared for several orphans of Revolutionary soldiers. Struck with the possibilities of a city-supported orphanage, he sought and won election to the City Council in 1788, and two years later saw the Council pass an Ordinance providing for the establishment of an institution to care and provide an education for poor orphans and the children of poor and disabled parents. A house on Market Street was rented temporarily until the orphanage building was completed in 1794.² From then until 1951 the Charleston Orphan House was located at the corner of Calhoun and St. Philip Streets. In 1853-1854 extensive additions were made to the five-story building, which had been described earlier as "the finest edifice of its kind in the New World."³

Twelve Commissioners, including some of the most prominent men in the city, were elected by the City Council and were responsible for the government and operation of the House. The Board met weekly at the Orphan House; each member, in rotation, served for one week as Visiting Commissioner. It was his duty to visit and inspect the institution, confer with the officials, and attempt to see every child. His

¹ Charleston *News and Courier*, Sept. 6, 1948; *Year Book, 1880, City of Charleston, So. Ca.* (Charleston, n.d.), p. 41. Here cited as *Year Book, 1880*.

² Charleston *Daily Courier*, May 14, 1864; "Historical Sketch of the Charleston Orphan House," *The Duke Endowment, Sixth Annual Report of the Orphan Section, 1930* (Charlotte, 1931), pp. 105-106; *By-Laws of the Orphan House of Charleston, South Carolina, Revised and Adopted by the Board of Commissioners, 4th April, 1861, Submitted To and Approved by the City Council of Charleston, 23rd April, 1861* (Charleston, 1861), p. 9. Here cited as *By-Laws*.

³ Charleston *News and Courier*, Sept. 6, 1948, Sept. 7, 1951; *Year Book, City of Charleston, South Carolina, 1949-1950-1951* (Charleston, n.d.), p. 309.

observations and recommendations were reported to the Board at its next meeting. Another of his duties was to investigate all applicants for admission and to report in writing to the Board. In addition, he conducted the Sunday morning service and attended the Sunday afternoon service in the Orphan House Chapel. Each clergyman in Charleston was invited, in turn, to officiate at the afternoon service.⁴

In 1861, thirty-nine employees were caring for 360 children in the institution. The Steward was responsible for the operation of the home, and in the hours set aside for recreation he was to direct "such well-regulated muscular and gymnastic exercises in the open air as may conduce to the vigorous health and physical improvement of the children." The Matron supervised the nurses and was responsible for the sewing, cooking, and washing departments. The Sewing Mistress trained some 100 girls to mark clothing and to use the sewing machine; the girls in one year made 8,000 items, including their own clothing. The nurses supervised the children except during school hours and were instructed to grant such favors and allow such indulgences as were "consistent with the well-being of the children . . ." Each nurse had charge of from thirty to forty-five children and lived with them in the dormitories or in adjoining rooms.⁵

The Charleston Orphan House school was held by the Commissioners to be "the great agent of reform and improvement, to which must be committed for the most part the physical, moral and intellectual culture of the children . . ." They therefore required that the highest standards be maintained. Each child who was capable of receiving benefit from the school was required to attend. In addition to the Principal there were eight teachers and assistants who conducted the classes. The school day included the hours from nine to twelve and from three to five, and the Principal could require teachers to take charge of "insubordinate or negligent pupils . . ." after school hours. The instructors were expected to follow a course of study which would improve them as teachers, and by example were to impress upon the children "the importance of punctuality, regularity and neatness."⁶

The main sources of income for the Charleston Orphan House were a yearly appropriation by the City Council and the income from two endowment funds. The "public endowment fund" in 1861 amounted to

⁴ *By-Laws*, pp. 7-8, 13, 17-18, 33-35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-26; *Circular of the City Council on Retrenchment, and Report of the Commissioners of the Orphan House* (Charleston, 1861), pp. 6-7. Here cited as *Circular of City Council*.

⁶ *By-Laws*, pp. 27-31; *Circular of City Council*, p. 6.

\$168,489.60 and yielded \$9,300. Some \$50,000 of the principal had come from property in the parishes of St. Philip and St. Michael which had escheated to the state, and the remainder was from legacies and donations. The Mayor, the City Treasurer, and the Chairman of the Orphan House Commissioners were the trustees of this fund. The private endowment fund, known as the "Private Fund," had been set up in 1840 because some of the gifts were made specifically to the Commissioners of the Orphan House. They acted as the trustees of this fund, which in 1861 amounted to \$76,775.98. The income was used for the comfort and benefit of the children and officials. In one year \$2,588.33 was used to supplement city appropriations for salaries, \$780.24 was used to purchase books, clothing and stationery, and \$370.00 was spent for furniture and machines.⁷

Three of the bequests to the Private Fund were made for specific purposes. Mr. A. De La Barben of Nassau, who had been an inmate of the House, left \$1,966.52 to be used to give money to the orphans on the day of their marriage or when they entered business. The customary amount given as a "marriage portion" was \$50.00. Mrs. Mary C. Gregorie left a sum to be used for educating a boy "of suitable talents and disposition . . ." for the ministry. Z. Y. Anderson went from the orphanage to the Episcopal Seminary in Camden and received \$100.00 a year from the Private Fund for his seminary expenses and \$300.00 after he entered the ministry. The other special bequest, made in 1854 by John Dee, was to be used in educating boys for some trade or profession.⁸

The outstanding event of the year for the orphans and the officials of the House, and one in which the city shared, was the celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the Orphan House on October 18th. A newspaper account of the 1861 celebration stated:

The sympathy universally felt for the inmates of this Asylum, the pride and pleasure our community take in the grand charity, the attractive and interesting manner in which its birthday is celebrated, the happy faces of the orphaned children, contribute to make its an-

⁷ *By-Laws*, pp. 6, 10-12; *Year Book*, 1880, pp. 63-64; Commissioners' Minutes, March 1, 1860, Oak Grove, North Charleston. Four volumes of the Commissioners' Minutes, covering the years 1858-1877, have been used. Footnotes will give the date the entry was made, but will not designate the volume or page numbers.

⁸ *Year Book*, 1880, pp. 66-67; Record of Wills and Donations, 1795- , Oak Grove, North Charleston; Commissioners' Minutes, April 5, May 5, 1860, Feb. 28, April 25, July 11, 18, 1861, April 17, 1862, Feb. 26, March 5, 1863. While the Private Fund was set up in 1840, earlier bequests, such as that of De La Barben in 1839, when made to the Commissioners, were transferred from the public endowment fund to the Private Fund.

niversaries one of the most marked and delightful occasions our people assemble to commemorate.

The celebration began at the Orphan House school where the ceremonies included Scripture reading, prayer, singing by the children and the presentation of prizes to two girls for excellence in their school work and deportment. The children, accompanied by a brass band, then marched to the South Carolina Institute Hall, where the Reverend E. H. Myers, editor of the *Southern Christian Advocate*, delivered the annual address. There followed an oration by one of the boys and Camile Dennis recited a poem, "The Orphan's Plea for the Soldier." A collection was taken up for sick and wounded soldiers.⁹

The Chairman reported at the next meeting of the Commissioners that seven boys had refused the sum usually taken from the collection and paid to the anniversary speakers and alternates, on the grounds that the money was intended for hospitalized soldiers. William C. Bee, one of the Commissioners, wrote C. G. Memminger, to whom the collection had been sent, of the boys' action. The Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, who had been an inmate of the Orphan House in his youth and who had served as a Commissioner since 1851, replied that the money had been forwarded to the South Carolina Hospital for Confederate troops. He considered the collection as being

substantially a donation by the children; and the portion given up by the speakers and their alternates is literally a double portion. . . . For many years both you and I have looked upon them and cared for them as our children; and it will gratify them to know that in this exhibition of liberal kindness, we feel a parental pride and offer them our warmest approbation.

At the direction of the Board, the speakers and the alternates received the usual recompense from the Private Fund.¹⁰

Because of the war the anniversary was observed at a private celebration in 1862. General Beauregard was invited to attend, but he was forced to decline because of his absence from the city. He wrote the orphans that he would visit them at the first opportunity and he did so on November 12th. After visiting the various departments, he wrote, "I am both surprised and delighted at the success of this Institution, which does so much honor to those who founded it, and so much credit to those who have charge of it. It is much to be regretted that our private Institutions are not conducted on the same system." During Reconstruc-

⁹ *Charleston Daily Courier*, Oct. 19, 1861.

¹⁰ Commissioners' Minutes, Oct. 24, Nov. 14, 1861; *Charleston News and Courier*, Sept. 6, 1948; *Circular of City Council*, p. 40.

tion the public celebration of the anniversary was dispensed with for financial reasons, although a special dinner was given for the children on the anniversary date.¹¹

The problems connected with the financial management of the orphanage normally occupied a good part of the Commissioners' time, and the deranged economic conditions of the years of the Civil War and Reconstruction vastly complicated these problems. During the war increased appropriations from the City Council offset the increase in the cost of supplies to some extent, but strict economy was necessary. After the cost of bread had gone up from five cents to nine cents a pound in 1862, the Commissioners in 1863 agreed to contract for bread on a cost plus basis, with the baker receiving the average price of flour for the quarter and two cents a pound for baking and delivering the bread.¹²

One of the means the Commissioners used to partially offset wartime shortages and inflation was blockade running. In February 1863, Commissioner William C. Bee, who was the agent of a firm engaged in blockade running, called the attention of his fellow Commissioners to the poor condition of the children's clothing. The Board approved his proposal to use part of the income from the Private Fund to purchase Sea Island cotton, which was to be shipped to Liverpool and exchanged for clothing. Under Bee's direction twenty-seven bales of cotton were purchased for \$7,196.59. Ships of John Fraser and Company and of the Importing and Exporting Company carried the cotton to England and brought back clothing and shoes valued at \$100,000, without any charge for their services. Bee reported when the transaction was completed, he had a cash balance of \$14,101.51. Captain James Carlin of the blockade runner *Ella and Annie* donated \$2,000 to be used to buy cotton to be exchanged for shoes for the children. In addition, John B. Lafitte, of the Charleston firm of Lafitte and Brothers, sent from Nassau on the blockade runner *Antonica*, 1,750 yards of piece goods, handkerchiefs, thread, buttons and 100 pounds of soap for the orphans.¹³

For the most part the admission of children to the Orphan House was a routine matter, but wartime changes brought several problems. In October 1861, three children were admitted after Dr. Dawson, Chairman of the Commissioners of the Poor, had reported that their father was in the army and their mother was a lunatic. Within a month

¹¹ Commissioners' Minutes, Oct. 30, Nov. 20, 1862, Oct. 14, 1875.

¹² *Circular of City Council*, p. 7; Commissioners' Minutes, July 10, 1862, Feb. 12, 1863, Dec. 5, 1864.

¹³ Commissioners' Minutes, Feb. 12, May 7, 21, Aug. 6, 1863, Oct. 12, 1864; *Charleston Daily Courier*, Jan. 12, May 23, 1863, Sept. 8, 1870. The gift of \$2,000 by Captain Carlin was included in the \$7,196.59 used to purchase cotton.

the father returned to the city and his children were released to him when he complained that they had been put in the orphanage without his consent.¹⁴ In the summer of 1861 the Commissioners faced what they must have considered a test case, when application was made for the admission of the four children of a Mrs. Moore, whose soldier-husband had died at Pensacola. The Commissioners could not admit the children, because a City Ordinance required that applicants must have lived in Charleston twelve months before they could be received, unless the City Council waived the residence requirement. The Commissioners evidently anticipated that if they sought a waiver for the children other soldiers' widows would come to Charleston to place their children in the Orphan House. After an interview with Mrs. Moore and several reports by the Visiting Commissioner, the Board rejected the application. The Commissioners of the Poor carried the case to the City Council, where the Orphan House Board was sustained by a vote of eight to five. A year later the Commissioners voted to admit the Moore children because they now met the residence requirement. At the same meeting a committee was appointed to formulate a policy for the admission of transient pauper children who had been in the city twelve months, but the committee never reported. The attack on Charleston and the removal of the orphanage to Orangeburg made the question a theoretical one.¹⁵

Considering the number of children in the House, few problems of discipline were referred to the Commissioners. Several of the cases which did reach the Board involved boys who left the institution without permission. The Steward, in one such case, was authorized to use "legal means if necessary . . ." to secure the return of six boys. In another instance detectives were hired in an unsuccessful attempt to locate two boys. In more serious cases the Commissioners acted with dispatch and decision. The Steward reported that a boy, who was discovered trying to set fire to the building, had accused two other boys of assisting him. A special committee of the Board investigated and reported the boy who had been caught "had been placed on board a vessel bound to a foreign port under the care of the captain who engaged that he would not be brought back to the city." The two accused of being accomplices had been released from confinement to the House after having received such advice as would make them realize the seriousness of their act.¹⁶

¹⁴ Commissioners' Minutes, Oct. 3, 10, Nov. 14, 1861.

¹⁵ *Charleston Daily Courier*, Aug. 16, 29, Sept. 12, 1861; *By-Laws*, p. 33; Commissioners' Minutes, June 13, 20, July 25, Aug. 1, 29, 1861, June 12, 1862.

¹⁶ Commissioners' Minutes, Sept. 21, 1863, Feb. 18, March 11, 18, 1869, Jan. 2, 9, 30, 1862.

Normally, when the children were between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, they were apprenticed to learn some useful trade. The Board was very careful in the choice of the field of work and in the applicants they approved, since, as the School Committee noted in 1863, a proper master could determine a child's "destiny in life . . .," and all previous training could be wasted if an improper choice were made. Each year the Steward, Principal and Matron made up a list of those who were ready to be apprenticed. When the Board had approved the list, applicants for apprentices, after securing the approval of a Commissioner, could interview the boys and girls. A child could not leave the House until the Binding Out Committee had reported and the Board had approved the apprenticeship agreement.¹⁷

Evidence of what the Commissioners did not consider a useful trade is given by the unfavorable report of the Binding Out Committee on the application of James G. Gibbes and Company of Columbia for several boys and girls to become apprentices in a cotton factory. Such work was not "a healthful employment . . ." and offered no "prospect of advancement in life." On several occasions the Board turned down the applications of farmers for apprentices, yet a boy was bound out to Dr. O. C. Rhame of Mt. Holly to superintend the doctor's farm.¹⁸ One boy was apprenticed to an upholsterer, another to a blacksmith, and a third to a printer. One was to learn the trade of a bookbinder from E. R. Stokes of Columbia, while another was apprenticed to a cabinet-maker from Tennessee. Charles Morrison became the apprentice of Robert McKay, Ordinary of Greenville District, and was to work in his office. A girl was bound out to the Reverend A. Toomer Porter "as an apprentice to reside in his family . . .," and another girl was to learn "house and needle work." On at least one occasion a child from the Orphan House was adopted.¹⁹

As early as February 1862, a committee of the Board of Commissioners was named to investigate the possibility of having to remove the children from Charleston because of the threat of invasion. No action was taken until October, when another committee, after a conference with the Mayor, undertook a search for suitable accommodations should a flight from Charleston become necessary. At Orangeburg they found

¹⁷ *Year Book, 1880*, p. 42; *By-Laws*, pp. 16, 34; *Commissioners' Minutes*, Jan. 1, 1863.

¹⁸ *Commissioners' Minutes*, Jan. 1, 1863, May 5, 10, 1860, Nov. 20, 1862, March 26, 1863, Dec. 11, 1862.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 19, 1860, Nov. 14, 1861, Jan. 29, 1863, July 10, 1862, Dec. 6, June 14, March 1, 1860, Jan. 30, 1862, March 5, 1868, Aug. 15, Dec. 19, 1861.

a building which had been used as a seminary for young ladies; the owner, the Reverend Mr. Legare, offered the building to the committee for \$19,000. It was not until August 1863, that evacuation of the children became necessary, and then George A. Trenholm offered to buy the building in Orangeburg for the use of the orphans. The City Council authorized the Commissioners to accept Trenholm's "patriotic and timely offer . . .," and to proceed with the removal of the children. On August 24, the Commissioners instructed the Steward to move the children and the furniture as soon as possible.²⁰

The Reverend W. B. W. Howe requested the Commissioners to permit the twenty-two children of the Episcopal Church Home to join the orphans under the city's care in Orangeburg. He explained that the bombardment had already forced the evacuation of the Church Home and that the children were in temporary quarters in Hampstead Mall. The Commissioners granted Howe's request on the condition that arrangements could be made so that the health of none of the children would be endangered.²¹

During the twenty-six months the orphanage was located in Orangeburg the Commissioners were unable to keep the children or the employees under the close supervision to which they had been accustomed. A nurse, who was dismissed for refusing to comply with a request from the Steward, wrote the Commissioners that they were unaware of "what we have to contend with here. . . ." The discord among the employees may well have been aggravated by the fact that some of the recently admitted children had grown up during the war without the normal supervision of a father and without any schooling other than that received on the city streets.²²

After the return to Charleston the lack of harmony among the employees continued. The Steward and Matron resigned and one of the Commissioners noted that they were forced to do so "for their peace and comfort." After a dispute between the new Steward and the Principal had resulted in the appeal of both to the Commissioners, the Board on January 28, 1869, requested the Principal, Miss Agnes K. Irving, to take over the duties of the Steward and the Matron,²³ Miss Irving had been Principal for fourteen years when she became the "executive officer." A correspondent of the New York *Herald* who had visited the

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Feb. 27, March 13, Oct. 30, Dec. 4, 1862, Aug. 22, 24, 1863.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 24, 1863.

²² *Ibid.*, June 15, 24, 1864; *Charleston Daily Courier*, May 14, 1864.

²³ Commissioners' Minutes, June 13, Dec. 19, 1867, Feb. 27, Dec. 24, 1868, Jan. 28, 1869; Schirmer Diary, March 12, 1868, South Carolina Historical Society.

orphanage in March 1865, described her as being a very sensible lady. Although a native of New York, her sympathies were entirely with the South. Under her direction the children were singing songs and hymns while Sherman's troops carried out their work of destruction in Orangeburg. A plaque put up later in Miss Irving's memory bore the inscription, "A born teacher, a firm but judicious disciplinarian, a successful manager of affairs . . ." ²⁴ On more than one occasion she made sacrifices for the Orphan House. When the Commissioners increased her salary from \$250.00 to \$950.00 in 1866, they noted that during the war she had requested that her salary be reduced so that the pay of the teachers might be increased. Miss Irving's success as the executive officer is evident from the report of the Visiting Commissioner in February 1869, to the effect that he found an improvement in spirit and discipline which he attributed to the new administration, and from the statement of William C. Bee in June, that in fifteen years he had not seen the institution so well regulated as it was under Miss Irving's direction. ²⁵

During Reconstruction financial problems naturally continued to occupy much of the Board's attention. In December 1865, the Chairman reported that the Mayor had recommended that children be admitted only in cases of "extreme destitution." A report on the Private Fund revealed that the collapse of the Confederacy had wiped out all but \$34,239.19 in stocks and bonds that had been valued at \$90,250.19. In keeping with, or perhaps in contradiction to, the Mayor's advice, the Commissioners admitted eighteen children in three weeks in January and February 1866. From March 1st to May 10th no applications were approved because of sickness in the House, but then the Commissioners voted to admit twenty-seven children. A month later another dormitory was opened to provide space for more children. ²⁶

The Orphan House suffered less than some of the other city institutions from the mismanagement and plundering of Reconstruction. Colonel Cogswell, acting Mayor by military appointment, expressed his pleasure at the operation of the House after a visit in March 1866. The Commissioners adopted his suggestions that they secure a washing machine and two cows. The next Mayor, George W. Clarke, who was appointed by General E. R. S. Canby, referred to the orphanage in his annual message of December 1868 as an "expensive but excellently in-

²⁴ *Charleston Courier*, March 29, 1865; picture of plaque which was located in the Charleston Orphan House, in collection of photographs at Oak Grove, North Charleston.

²⁵ Commissioners' Minutes, Aug. 7, 1862, Aug. 25, 1866, Feb. 18, June 24, 1869.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Dec. 7, 21, 1865, Jan. 25, Feb. 1, 8, March 1, May 10, June 7, 1866.

tioned institution. . . ." He contended that many children were admitted whose parents could provide for them and that the school "educated more for the parlor and the stage, than the house and the apprentice shops. . . ." He noted that the Sisters of Mercy were caring for 100 children at a per capita expense of less than half the \$3.00 a week it cost for each child at the Orphan House. He proposed to make all the city institutions as nearly self-sufficient as possible. This would be done in part by opening a home for "young vagrants," who, with the inmates of the Alms House, would raise vegetables and pigs for all those cared for by the city.²⁷ There is no indication that anyone other than the Mayor took his recommendations seriously.

There were some bright spots, despite the many problems of Reconstruction. John Rose bequeathed \$5,000.00 to the Orphan House and the sum was received from his New York executor in October 1865. Thomas Hamilton of New York sent the Commissioners a check for \$10.00 to pay for "certain books, the property of the institution . . . which came into his possession on the evacuation of Charleston." Colonel F. W. McMaster of Columbia forwarded the Commissioners a check from a friend, O. C. Nichols of Philadelphia, who by a tableaux at his home had raised \$800.00 for orphanages in five Southern states.²⁸

A study of the daily routine of the children made in 1866 revealed that from Monday through Friday they spent five hours a day in school, two hours and thirty-five minutes at study, fifty minutes at devotions, and one hour and five minutes in washing and dressing. The girls had twenty minutes less time for recreation than the boys, largely due to the fact that they performed household duties and were in the sewing room three hours and fifty minutes a day. The Board approved the recommendation of the Chairman that the girls be allowed more time for recreation, lest "physical lassitude and mental depression result."²⁹

The children enjoyed occasional breaks from their routine. In the summer of 1867 the annual picnic, a highlight of the pre-war years, was resumed. The Northeastern Railroad provided transportation to Philip J. Porcher's farm, where the children spent a carefree day. When, in 1875, the picnic was held at the Otranto Club, the Commissioners expressed their appreciation to General Vodges for detailing the post band

²⁷ *Year Book, 1881, City of Charleston, So. Ca.* (Charleston, n.d.), p. 376; *Charleston Daily Courier*, March 18, Dec. 17, 1868; Commissioners' Minutes, March 19, April 9, 1868, May 21, 1865, Feb. 5, 1874.

²⁸ Commissioners' Minutes, Oct. 6, Dec. 21, 1865, Jan. 4, June 28, Aug. 16, 1866, July 18, 1867.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, April 12, 1866.

and to Colonel Lee for the use of ambulances and wagons.³⁰ In 1869 the children attended a performance by Skiff and Gaylord's minstrels at Hibernian Hall, and on another occasion Professors Holmes and Gibbes presented a magic lantern exhibition. Other entertainment enjoyed by the orphans included the Fireman's Parade, a presentation by the Kunkel Opera Troupe, and a performance on the Citadel Green by Luwande's Circus.³¹

In June 1866, seven months after the return from Orangeburg, there were 208 children in the orphanage. The number of dependents in the House jumped to 285 in 1867 and two years later 321 orphans were cared for. In the decade of the seventies the population of the House showed a gradual decline from 300 in 1870 to 234 in 1876. This can be explained in part by the fact that similar institutions, two of which received financial assistance from the city, cared for some of the orphans of Charleston.³²

The management of the Orphan House during Reconstruction drew praise from a special committee of the Chamber of Commerce, which at the request of the City Council made a study of the financial condition of the city in 1875. In striking contrast to what they observed at the Orphan House, the Committee reported that the Alms House had been "converted into a huge machine for the manufacture of paupers . . .," and that its management was "a disgrace to a civilized community."

The Committee found the Orphan House

in the very best condition in every respect. The boys, under the supervision of the gardener, render material aid in keeping the grounds in good order, and in cultivating the extensive garden from which is derived a large proportion of the vegetables served at the children's table. . . . The girls cut, fit and make all the clothing worn by both sexes.

The efficient management of Miss Irving's administration had helped to reduce the expense of caring for each child from \$155.81 a year for the period 1866-1868 to \$106.39 for the next three years. For 1872-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, May 16, 1867; *Charleston Daily Courier*, May 11, 1867; *Charleston News and Courier*, May 12, 1875.

³¹ Commissioners' Minutes, Oct. 21, 1869, July 25, 1867, April 26, Sept. 13, 1866; *Charleston Daily Courier*, June 4, 1868.

³² Commissioners' Minutes, June 24, 1869, Jan. 1877; *Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Orphan House, November, 1872* (Charleston, 1872), p. 5; *Charleston Daily Courier*, Feb. 23, 1870; *Charleston News and Courier*, Jan. 7, 1874. The Sisters of Mercy began receiving financial aid from the city in 1870 and the Holy Communion Church Institute (later Porter Military Academy) in 1874.

1874 the cost had been further reduced by \$1.27 per child. The members of the committee had "been so much gratified at the result of their examination of this institution, that they cheerfully recommend it to the kind consideration of the citizens generally, believing it to be as well managed as any similar institution in the country."³³

The Charleston Orphan House was able to care for the "poor orphan children, and those of poor, distressed and disabled parents..." during the years of the Civil War and Reconstruction because the people of Charleston had come to share John Robertson's concern for these unfortunates.³⁴ According to one contemporary account there was not in South Carolina, and probably not in the South, "an institution which deservedly enjoys a greater hold on the affections of our people than does the Orphan House of Charleston..."³⁵ The humanitarian motives which led such outstanding citizens as George A. Trenholm, George W. Williams, Dr. James Moultrie, Dr. Benjamin Huger, W. J. Bennett, Henry A. DeSaussure and others to serve as Commissioners provided the Orphan House with strong guidance from men who were sincerely interested in the welfare of the children. The former inmates and friends of the institution who made donations and bequests to the two endowment funds permitted the House to provide facilities and services which otherwise would have been denied the children. While the name of the institution was changed to Oak Grove when the move was made from downtown Charleston, the proud tradition is continued today in the new buildings in North Charleston.

³³ *Charleston News and Courier*, July 6, 1875.

³⁴ *By-Laws*, p. 9.

³⁵ *Charleston Daily Courier*, Dec. 27, 1865.