Needed but not absolutely essential
Articles.
Suit of American Made office furniture
Case for forms
Cabinet of pigeon holes for filling away papers
Cabinet or stand for filing Catalogues
A Second Type-writer
Carpets.
Fire proof safe.

№ 84 357

AMERICAN CONSULATE.

Jerusalem, August 30th 1909.

SUBJECT:
ALTENHOUSE MOSCHAB SEKENIM (Home for Aged Men and Women).

The Honorable
Assistant Secretary of State
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose a report in duplicate on the above mentioned subject, in answer to your communication No. 39, dated April 6th last, File No. 18813/-1.

The cause of the unavoidable delay that has occurred in getting off this report appears in the first part of the report itself.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

American Consul.

Enclosures:
Report in duplicate.

AMERICAN CONSULATE.

JERUSALEM.

August 20th 1909.

R E P O R T .

SUBJECT:

Altenhouse Moschab Sekenim (Home for aged men and women).

I have the honor to inform the Department that in answer to communication No. 39, dated April 6th last, File No. 18813/-1, that I have spent much time in investigating the conditions of the institutions of Jerusalem for the care of aged men and women, as called for in said communication.

There are two institutions in the city of the same name, and it was difficult to determine which one of them was referred to in the enquiry. I found there was a controversy between them, as well as rivalry, the friends of each calling the other bad. Some time was lost in investigating the wrong one. Later I was informed by a member of one of the committees of the other institution of facts which showed him to be acquainted with the facts set out in the letter I had received. Thereupon inquiry was commenced as to the other, which is the one with which he is connected. Both of the institutions have agents out soliciting funds and each of these agents calls his institution a charitable concern. The asylum first organized is called THE ASYLUM FOR THE AGED. The other institution recently organized is called THE NEW ASYLUM FOR THE AGED. It is the older of the two that I have investigated, and to which the following particulars refer.

A benevolent gentleman named Samuel Borach Sendless, a retired physician from Australia, desiring to engage in some philanthropic work directed to bettering the condition of his

race

race, in Jerusalem, concluded that one of the greatest needs was an institution for the aged poor of both sexes who were in need and distress. He was not wealthy, but with his own means he organized such an institution, and gave it the name of "Altenhouse Moschab Sekenim", which it still retains. This was about twenty five years ago, and it was continued under his management for about five years.

The institution under this good man was purely charitable in character, and during the time it was under his management and control it sustained a high reputation for the good it accomplished, the honesty and integrity of its management and the conscientious faithfulness with which funds donated for its benefit were applied.

Its management was public spirited and benevolent. No fees or salaries were allowed or paid. The reputation thus made established it as an institution of importance making for good, and because of this character its founder was assisted by donations that were continued long after he had retired, and after the character of the original intent and purpose of the organization had been changed.

The organizer was an old man and he soon found the work was too much for him. He retired after he had been engaged in it four or five years. The original intent was to establish a home for the indigent poor who were too old to help themselves, and without cost or expense to them.

Under the management succeeding him salaries were paid to both members of the committees and to officials connected with it. No one was permitted to enter without the payment of a sum of money, the minimum amount being $400 and as much more as could be exacted from the party applying for admission.

These facts I have learned from ourside parties. I have personally applied to members of the committees managing the institution, and to its officials, to make me a full statement concerning it, its

nected with it, and this they promised to do on two separate occasions, but after waiting for more than two months I have received no information from them whatever. I was cautioned by outside parties that no information would ever be given as to the home for aged women, but that I should by all means investigate it without giving notice of the intended visit, which I did.

I found the building in which the aged women are kept to be overcrowded and its condition, as to cleanliness, rendering it unfit for decent folks to live in. The rooms were filthy, and the stench from them most offensive and replusive. There may be reasons for the condition existing, but as no explanations were offered it would seem that it was not at all objectionable in the minds of the attendants and of the officials at the head of the concern. I asked why the rooms should be in such an offensive condition and was informed that it was because the parties occupying them would not keep them clean. I asked if the beds and bedding were ever aired and was informed that there was no place to air them. I suggested that it could be done in the place where the washing was dried, to which there was no answer made. The cooking arrangements seemed to me to be wholly inadequate to serve so many people, and when I asked how it could be done I was informed that all of them did not eat at the same time.

Efforts were made to show me the inmates were uncommonly well fed. A pail of eggs was displayed and a small tub containing meat. I was not impressed as was intended, as the supply would give a very meager portion to each of the nearly four hundred people to be fed. I suggested to them my thought that the eggs were not used for food for all of them, and was informed that they were for the weak and sick. It was the method and evident intent with which the food was shown that gave the bad

bad impression. It looked much like intended deception.

The inmates I talked with all expressed their satisfaction with the home and their treatment. This in itself is not good evidence, as it was done in the presence of the officials and attendants, and with no law to protect them they necessarily would be subsrrvient and do all in their power to stand well with the officials.

Some of them have very good rooms and keep them neat and presentable. These are provided with much better surroundings and comforts, but they furnish them at their own expense, and because of neater habits keep them in better condition. The aged women who can afford it give to the institution a sum of money (I believe it is $600), with which a room is erected for the applicant within the yard on which is located the asylum for aged men, which is outside the gates of the city in a good location. In this room she lives during the term of her life, and at her death the room becomes the property of the Asylum. A number of these rooms or buildings have been erected which form comfortable places for the inmates, and are kept in good condition, and the sanitary arrangements and surroundings are healthful and as good as could be expected.

The home for aged women is lacking in conveniences and sanitation. Its inmates present a picture of distress and wretchedness. The air prevailing is not a pleasant one, and nothing was displayed to indicate that these poor old people had the means at hand for a single joy or pleasure beyond the mere fact of living. Many of them were sick, and the wonder is that more of them are not in the same condition.

The sick seemed to be well cared for, and I am informed that the Doctor visits them regularly and sometimes as often as three times a day. The food given them is wholesome, as it appears to me, and they do not present the appearance of being starved or underfed. It cannot be otherwise than cheap, and

there is no doubt but the people occupying the homes are much better cared for than if left to their own resources.

The home for aged men is located outside of the city gates, splendidly situated for both sanitation and healthy surroundings. The rooms are comfortable and commodious, and the yard or compound in whichthe buildings are situated is pleasant and is kept neat and clean with plenty of room for exercise. A library is maintained and there are a number of synagogues for both worship and study. The buildings are fine, and the place is kept in excellent condition both as to sanitation cleanliness and comfort. The inmates here present a much better appearance, although the Orthodox Jew, at all times and in all conditions, looks solemn and expressionless. The conveniences here are more ample and seem to be sufficient for the needs of the occupants. There is no fault to be found with the management of this institution as far as can be determined by a casual visit. Indeed, everything about the premises seems praiseworthy and deserving support.

In view of the fact that both of these institutions are under the same management it is possible that the committee is not so much to blame for the bad conditions apparent at the home for the aged women. I have described them both as they appeared to me, and the committee had an opportunity to throw light upon the subject but failed to do so. The blame therefore attaches to them if any injustice is done.

I would further say that in my judgment these institutions cannot be maintained from the sum received or charged for the entrance fee. Unless contributions are received from other sources the institutions must close or be greatly hampered for means or the inmates suffer for the common necessaries of life. The salaries paid to the officials, as reported to me, are not too high. The only objection I could offer to the management, taking into consideration all the obstacles they have to encounter

counter, is the fact that there is no publicity given to the amount of funds they receive. This is true, I am informed, of most of the charitable institutions located here. It is also reported that an inspection of the books is objected to by the managers in charge.

The Altenhouse Moschab Sekenim is under the protection of the Turkish government and is subject to the laws of that country.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

American Consul.