

F O R E W O R D

JUST 100 years ago, in 1839, the first Normal School in this country was established by Horace Mann in Lexington, Massachusetts. That was well after the era of pioneer settlement of the states along the Eastern seaboard and during a time when industrialization was rapidly building up private and public wealth in those states. Yet even there the idea of training teachers took root slowly and many years passed before Horace Mann's ideal for the training of teachers came to be accepted on a wide enough scale to lift the educational standards in the public schools.

In the states to the West, into which settlers were still moving and where a semi-frontier condition still existed, educational opportunities were sharply limited. Many colleges had already been established there, but for the most part they still maintained their ecclesiastical bias with a leaning toward the training of ministers. Their curricula were rigid and tuition costs limited the educational opportunities which they afforded to people of means. Public school education partook both of the frontier conditions of the region and of that other frontier in education which was just then being explored by the great educators of the nineteenth century.

By the close of the Civil War the task of settlement had been largely completed in the state of Ohio except for a few sections. One of the most important of these was the Northwestern part of the state, where a combination of forests and

swamps still presented an obstacle to settlement. Thus the region with which this book is concerned was, at the close of the Civil War, just emerging from frontier conditions. It was at that time that the school whose struggles are here described was brought into existence. In a sense this book is a case history tracing the evolution of the educational system in a fairly typical section of the Middle West from the time of its early settlement through to the present day. But in another sense, the story of this school is far from typical; for though it had its origin in conditions that might be duplicated in countless other communities, the monumental work of its founder would be difficult to parallel.

One of the most important and oft quoted clauses in the Ordinance of 1787 declared that "religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." Despite the intent of this provision, public school education in Ohio grew slowly. Control of the educational system was left to local school districts which, operating independently, maintained no common standards. Centralization of control over local schools proceeded slowly in a state where evidence of the pioneer spirit of individualism and independence were everywhere apparent. Furthermore, the tracts of school lands, allocated under the Ordinance of 1787, were slow in acquiring value. Most important, the state was largely agricultural and the great increases in productivity in agriculture were still in the future. The land produced not much more than a bare living and the people were poor.

Under such conditions how was the average young man or woman to get an education beyond what the country district schools had to offer? And how were teachers—trained teachers, as Horace Mann had urged—to be provided for the public schools?

Those who review the history of Normal School education in the Middle West will find that aside from a few notable examples, such as the Illinois Normal University at Bloomington, Illinois and the Michigan Normal School at Ypsilanti, Michigan, the training of teachers had to be left to colleges on the one hand and to the private academies on the other. For the most part the curricula of the colleges did not fit the requirements of teacher training education, nor were the school terms arranged so that a teacher could carry on his education in addition to his regular teaching activities. In addition, the expense of a college education was beyond the means of most teachers, and the opportunities for those who completed their college education in other occupations were too numerous for many to find their way into public school teaching.

Hence during the two or three decades following the Civil War, it was to the private academies and the private Normal Schools that the task of training teachers fell. With meager transportation facilities and unbelievably bad roads these schools had to be highly localized. Few were the communities that did not boast of an academy. Most of these schools were on the level of what we now think of as secondary or high school education, although outside of the larger cities, they were for years conducted on a pri-

vate basis. Despite their excellence as judged by the standards of the time, they were not adequate to the task of training teachers; and the private Normal Schools, developed in most cases from these academies or "select" schools, gradually evolved.

For more than a generation these private unendowed institutions prepared the great mass of teachers for the public schools. As the standards of education rose, their standards kept up with them. Gradually, however, the process of centralization of control of education by the state and the establishment of uniform standards in public school education made it impossible for most of them to continue. The function of teacher training came to be taken over by the state as Horace Mann had advocated years before. But in Ohio it was not until around the close of the century that this transition was effected.

To meet these new conditions, the few remaining private Normal Schools sought by emphasis upon those elements in their structure which were unique to maintain their existence in the face of strong competition from state supported Normal Schools usually by transfer of their management to some other group, such as the church or the community. Thus the private Normal School as such gradually passed out of the picture leaving to other types of organizations the task of teacher training education.

The history of these private Normal Schools has remained one of the unwritten chapters of American history. In the Report of the National Educational Association of

1928, Dr. A. E. Winship of the *New England Journal of Education* was quoted as saying:

"There are Normal Schools and State Teachers' Colleges in every state in the Union, and there is nothing available that gives the faintest suggestion of the birth throes of these teacher training institutions in the New World. No history or encyclopedia of education has anything by way of enlightenment on this important development of the public school system."

The purpose of this book is to tell the story of one of these private Normal Schools—one which has had perhaps as great an influence in its sixty-seven years of existence as any school in the Middle West. If the narrative seems to partake too largely of the story of one man's life, it is because the man and the institution which he founded were inseparably bound together. This was a school into which the founder projected his ideals and his life, and it was unavoidable that it should grow up around his personality. It is accordingly fitting that in this year, the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, the story of his life and of the school to which he gave it, should be presented to those whose affection for this school has endured through these many years.

In the preparation of this book, the author is fortunate in having, in addition to her own notes and recollections, Dr. Lehr's own "Reminiscences" written in 1904-1907 for the *University Herald*. This paper, begun as the weekly newspaper of the University, is now the *Ada Herald*.

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