

THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS IN THE EARLY LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

A NEED that had long existed in Virginia for more facilities to train women for the schools and homes was recognized by the state government on March 14, 1908, in the act establishing the Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg.

The first faculty meeting was held at 11 o'clock on Wednesday, September 22, 1909, in Maury (Science) Hall. In addition to President Julian A. Burruss, who had been on the scene for a year or more, the following were present: Cornelius J. Heatwole, professor of education; John W. Wayland, professor of history; Elizabeth P. Cleveland, professor of English; Natalie Lancaster, professor of mathematics; Yetta S. Shoninger, supervisor of practice teaching; Althea E. Loose (Mrs. Johnston), professor of physical education and Latin; Margaret G. King, professor of geography; and Lida P. Cleveland, professor of school music.

Six other teachers also served the first year: Evalina M. Harrington, kindergarten; S. Frances Sale, professor of household arts; Mattie A. Speck (Mrs. Speck Lowman), professor of drawing; Annie V. Cleveland, assistant in languages; Mary I. Bell, registrar and librarian; and Mrs. R. B. Brooke, matron.

Other faculty meetings followed the first one in quick succession, ten in all being held within the first month.

On Monday, September 27, 1909, students came in from 34 counties, and on the two days following they were registered for their respective courses. At 8:30 a. m., on Thursday, September 30, teachers met the first classes; and two hours later the same

forenoon the new school came together in its first assembly.

At that time only three buildings were in use—Maury Hall, Jackson Hall, and Cleveland Cottage, the last being then the unchanged Newman farm house. Library, classrooms, and the president's offices were all in Maury Hall; also, the assembly room. For the last, two class rooms at the northeast end of the building, on the second floor, rooms 27 and 28, now the chemical laboratory, were thrown into one by rolling up the partition. Therein daily assembly and all general meetings of the school were held until 1915. To all members of the institution in the early years, teachers and students, that old "chapel" is rich in cherished associations.

To all, that first assembly was vibrant with joy and hope. President Burruss was, of course, in charge. Besides faculty and students, distinguished friends of the new institutions were present: Hon. George B. Keezell and Hon. P. B. F. Good, members of the General Assembly; E. W. Carpenter, Rockingham County treasurer; George H. Hulvey, county superintendent of schools; Joseph G. Myers, county surveyor; and William H. Keister, principal of the Harrisonburg schools. All were recognized, and Mr. Keezell, among others, made a brief address. He and Mr. Carpenter were members of the board of trustees. Mr. Keezell and Mr. Good, ably supported by Dr. H. M. Rogers, Mr. A. H. Snyder, Mr. George N. Conrad, and others, had led the fight in the General Assembly and over the state for the establishment of the school.

That first session, 1909-1910, was of course a time of beginnings; and, judging from the history of twenty-two years, we may say that foundations were well laid. Besides the regular classes, various cultural auxiliaries were set on foot. A branch of

the Young Women's Christian Association was organized; two literary societies, the Lanier and the Lee, were founded; the Glee Club began its notable career; Arbor Day was observed on April 7, 1910; dramatic performances were staged; excursions were carried out; an honor system was inaugurated; and the first volume of the *School-ma'am*, the college annual, was published and paid for. The one thing that means most to some of us, still vital through the shine and shadows of more than two decades, is the good fellowship, the comradeship, that was established. Teachers and students were much as one big family. Personal touch and sympathetic coöperation cemented strong bonds. And it may be said with truth and thankfulness that this same spirit has continued to be one of the college's best traditions.

On October 18, 1909, Governor Swanson, who had just pride in the institution he had helped to establish, paid us a visit. This was a real red-letter day, and it also set a precedent. Every governor of Virginia, since the school has been in operation, has made us a visit or two during his term of office. On October 21, 1909, school colors were adopted—violet and gold: the former from the violet and white of the Lanier Society; the latter from the gray and gold of the Lee Society. Time and other factors have somehow changed the violet on our banners to purple. This can hardly be charged to color-blindness, but rather perhaps to the fact that purple is a more aggressive shade and easier to obtain in college fabrics. Following the first Christmas, President Burruss reported a visit from Santa Claus, who left two school songs, "Shendo Land" and "Blue-Stone Hill."

From the beginning the students had the frequent privilege of hearing distinguished speakers and accomplished entertainers, among others, Dean Southwick of the Emerson College of Oratory, Professor Charles A. Graves of the University of Virginia, and Walter B. Tripp of Boston. Mr. Tripp,

who was a real artist in the portrayal of Dickens characters, was at the school in 1910, 1914, and 1916. On May 18 and 19, 1910, the Coburn Woodland Players gave us their first delightful performances. From that year until 1916 they came to us annually, specializing in plays of Shakespeare and in the classic Greek tragedies. On November 14, 1910, a splendid music program was rendered by the Bostonia Sextette. On the 30th of the same month Governor Bob Taylor of Tennessee was heard in one of his inimitable lectures. A year later Arthur Conradi, violinist, and his brother, Austin Conradi, pianist, charmed the college and city with their artistic numbers. In February, 1912, they came again. A perennial favorite with music-lovers was Jules Falk, violinist, who had enthusiastic audiences in 1914, 1915, 1916, and 1917. On November 12, 1913, Norman Hackett lectured on Shakespeare, and the next day Dr. Henry Louis Smith spoke on "Stepping Stones to Good Teaching." In May, 1915, Ben Greet and his company of actors gave Shakespeare plays in the outdoor auditorium; and again, on January 4, 1930, the same distinguished exponent of English drama visited us with his company, this time presenting *Twelfth Night* and *Everyman*.

Within the year 1915-1916 two of Verdi's operas, *Il Trovatore* and *Rigoletto*, were given in Harrisonburg, and were well patronized by college folk and the people of the surrounding communities. On January 12, 1911, we heard Creatore and his band. On the night of March 31, 1916, college students, with several members of the faculty and a few Harrisonburg singers, gave *Pinafore* in a manner that would reflect credit on professionals. A preacher and teacher who won the attention and affection of students and faculty in the early years was Bishop Arthur S. Lloyd of New York City. Dr. B. F. Wilson and other Harrisonburg pastors were frequent speakers in chapel.

On June 13, 1911, the first diplomas were delivered to a class of twenty graduates, and the same day the Alumnae Association was organized with Amelia H. Brooke as first president. Ever since that time the Alumnae Association has been a source of strength and inspiration to the school. Twenty years of loyalty, twenty years of service, and twenty years of growing friendships have distinguished the organization.

In the graduating class of 1914 were eight young women who had been students in the school here for five years, having been among the original matriculates of September, 1909, and having finished their high-school work here before entering upon the regular normal courses. The same year, June, 1914, our special board of trustees was abolished and the management of the several normal schools of Virginia was turned over to a general board, consisting of twelve members.

The same year, 1914, was signalized in other ways. On the morning of May 4 the officers of the graduating class, with the faculty and student body assembled, broke ground for Harrison Hall, and early the next year the building, which has held such a prominent place in the life of the school ever since, was put into service. On the night of June 7, 1915, the alumnae banquet was held for the first time in the splendid new dining hall. The offices and the library (which up to that year had been in Room 9, Maury Hall) were moved into the new building. On May 13, 1914, the girls in white welcomed the cadet battalion from V. M. I., as it marched down the pike to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the battle of New Market. During that same spring, also, a committee of the faculty and students collected and arranged a lot of pictures and charts, showing the life and history of the school, which were sent to California and put on exhibit in 1915 at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

Late in the summer of 1914 came news of the outbreak of the World War. From the beginning President Burruss, seconding the pleas of the government at Washington, counseled neutrality, but it was easy to see that our students were keenly alive to the situation, and it was not long until some of the girls declared that they were ready to offer themselves as nurses or other helpers. When, in 1917, the United States formally entered the war, the loyalty and activity of the faculty and student body in various forms of civilian service were conspicuous and untiring. It was in the spring of 1917 that President and Mrs. Burruss presented to the school the life-size statue of Joan of Arc that may be seen in the lobby of Harrison Hall. What it meant in those tense days cannot now be appreciated adequately. And many of us still recall the occasion, at the end of the war, when Julia McCorkle, one of our own girls who had served heroically in the hospitals in France, spoke in assembly.

Our most trying experience, in those years, was in the autumn of 1918, when so many of our teachers and students were suddenly stricken with the terrible influenza that the school had to be closed from October 7 to November 6. But, by a great mercy of Providence, no member of the school died within that period. On Sunday, November 10, at 11 a. m., a special thanksgiving service was held in the college "chapel." Silent gratitude broke into hilarious joy on the following morning at daylight, when bells and shouting voices acclaimed the armistice.

One of the most significant phases of our college life has been found in student self-government, which came as a progressive evolution from the honor system inaugurated the first session. On February 25, 1915, the Student Association was formally organized, with Agness Stribling (Mrs. Dingleline) president of the executive board. Since then the machinery of gov-

ernment has been improved and the essential spirit has been maintained.

In March, 1917, three sections of the frieze, portraying Alexander's triumphal entry into Babylon, were placed in the lobby of Harrison Hall; and in June following five of the buildings were given the names by which they are now familiar. The original main building on the hill, first known as Science Hall, was renamed Maury Hall. Dormitory No. 2 was called Ashby Hall; Dormitory No. 3, Spotswood Hall. The cottage on the hill, which has gone through various stages of remodeling, was named Cleveland Cottage in honor of Miss Annie Cleveland, a beloved teacher who had died in December, 1916. The service building, known during its first two or three years as the "Students' Building," was named Harrison Hall, in honor of Gessner Harrison, a great teacher who was born in Harrisonburg in 1807.

Dormitory No. 1, with the consent of the trustees, had been christened "Burruss Hall" by the class of 1913; but, in accordance with a fixed determination of the president that no building should be named for a living person, it was renamed Jackson Hall in 1918, in memory of Stonewall Jackson, whose world-famous campaign of 1862 had been wrought out to its final climax only a dozen miles away to the southeast.

The session of 1918-1919 was signalized in several notable ways. For example, during that year we had among our distinguished instructors and entertainers Major C. E. King of the British Army, Professor William E. Dodd of the University of Chicago, Hamlin Garland, Mrs. Edward McDowell, and Professor Charles A. McMurry. In June, 1919, our first college degrees were given to a class of ten.

The school's most elaborate pageant was staged during two whole days in May, 1916, commemorating the 300th anniversary of the death of Shakespeare, but every local Red Cross drive during the war, and every Armistice Day celebration since, has

found the college girls in line. On May 5, 1926, they first participated in the Apple Blossom Festival at Winchester, winning second prize. Since then they have won another second prize and three first prizes.

From the first session, the college has enjoyed the cordial coöperation of the schools of Harrisonburg and surrounding communities to an unusual degree. This has made it possible for our young teachers to do their supervised work as teachers in actual schools—those of the city and the adjacent counties. This has resulted in decided benefits to all parties concerned. President Samuel P. Duke, who assumed control in 1919, like his predecessor, Mr. Burruss, has entered actively into community life and has had the constant and generous support of local business and fraternal organizations. In January, 1921, he had notable success in enlisting the faculty and the business and professional men of the city in support of an *alumnæ* project for erecting a new building at the college. On June 6, 1921, the cornerstone of the building was laid with Masonic ceremonies, and in due time *Alumnæ Hall* took its place on the campus as a monument to loyalty and as the happy answer to a real need. This notable achievement was followed by others of kindred nature.

THE VIRGINIA TEACHER, an educational magazine that has attracted wide notice, was set on foot by the college in February, 1920, succeeding the magazine issues of the *Normal Bulletin*. The *Breeze*, the weekly student newspaper, made its first appearance early in December, 1922. The *Schoolma'am*, the college annual, has taken high rank among publications of its class, almost from the first issue, in 1910.

JOHN W. WAYLAND

The good education of youth has been extended by wise men in all ages as the fullest foundations of the happiness both of private families and of commonwealth.

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN