

INTRODUCTION

Eastern Michigan University was established in 1849 as Michigan State Normal School to train teachers and mold good citizens. As an academic institution it was at first rated as a glorified academy (or "high school" of later date), but it also offered instruction in pedagogy (the art of teaching). It was a pioneer venture, the first west of the Allegheny mountains, sixth in the United States. There are now 385 institutions (public and private) in this country accredited for teacher training.

In its first half-century this school evolved into a four-year college, with a well-developed liberal arts program to supplement the teacher training. It was the second in the nation to achieve this status. During its second half-century it evolved further into a more broadly oriented liberal arts college, but with the emphasis still on teacher preparation; then, into the university that it is today.

In the course of its existence Eastern Michigan University ("Normal," as we shall for the most part refer to it) developed a nationwide reputation as a source of highly capable teachers. Its alumni include men and women who have won national and international recognition as leaders in education, science, and the professions. Among its faculty have been many exciting teachers, and a number who became eminent in their fields, both pedagogical and academic. Michigan Normal has been both a pioneer and an example of the best in teacher preparation.

The eleven and a-half decades treated in this history cover a period of sufficient length for some perspective on evolutionary processes, educational and social. Changing moods and modes, a radical transition from a primitive, provincial, rural to a sophisticated, worldly, urban society, an amazing development from a penurious to a highly affluent industrial economy marked these years.

These changes were accompanied by changes in viewpoint and modifications in objective. Progress in professional educational

knowledge, information and techniques was steady. Growing demands of the communities of the State found a sensitive response. Indeed, that the status of Eastern Michigan University today derived from a simple normal school is impressive tribute to the wholesome and extensive development of the social consciousness of the people of Michigan.

A number of developments in this history deserve brief reference here.

As a state-supported institution, Eastern Michigan University was until recently under the authority of a state board of control and is of necessity greatly concerned with the attitude of the state legislators, source of financial support. Until recently the board in control was known as the State Board of Education.

It had four members, three elected and one *ex-officio* (the State Superintendent of Public Instruction). Its original function was to govern the Normal. But from about the turn of the century other responsibilities were added, including three other normal schools. This development created a new situation in which close attention to the affairs of any one institution became impossible.

With the new State Constitution of 1963, this was changed and Eastern was provided with its own governing body composed of eight members called Regents.

As for relations with the legislature, the story, until the post-World War 11 years (and for a few years after World War 1) was marked by denial and frustration. The enthusiasm displayed at the founding of the institution did not find expression in legislative appropriations. In the early years this was due in large part to the financial condition of a young state that had not yet developed its potential. Support for the Normal rested largely on land grants and the genuine enthusiasm of the citizens of Ypsilanti who, in the first instance, made a generous offer of cash and, through the ensuing years, made several gifts of land for campus expansion.

One president, in a despondent moment, commented that up to his time not a building had been constructed according to original plans. Each had been curtailed in dimensions or facilities to satisfy a limited appropriation. At another time, when additional normal schools were being proposed, faculty and administration united in opposition, fearful of even smaller budgets.

Proximity to the University of Michigan also played a role. The U-M at all times was given priority and the Normal suffered in

consequence. Faculty salaries in Ypsilanti were small compared with those in Ann Arbor. Yet, during the Great Depression, the percentage cutbacks at the Normal were twice those imposed upon her larger neighbor.

(Relationships between the two schools shifted over the years. When the U-M established a chair for education in 1870, the Normal felt that its area was being invaded. A persistent effort in the face of lengthy resistance succeeded in gaining U-M recognition of credits earned at the Normal as equivalent in value to its own.

(In athletics, the proudest moment in football occurred when a Normal team *almost* defeated a Michigan team in a year when the latter won the Western Conference championship.

(The Graduate School of the U-M proved to be an excellent and readily available source for new Normal faculty. Aspirants for the doctoral degree could become members of the faculty and, on the side, pursue their studies. And when the State Board sought assistance from the U-M in establishing graduate work in the teachers colleges, a co-operative program was developed that paved the way for the present independent programs on the several campuses.)

Twice in Normal's history, there was threat of closing the institution, once as an economy measure during the depression, again on a demand for housing for factory workers in a neighboring war plant during World War II.

The spirit of the school was from the first marked by a strong sense of pride of mission. In the earlier years, this was colored by a moral and religious zest. As the curriculum grew and the social climate changed, the emphasis became more secular, the spirit of scientific inquiry more pronounced.

As one surveys the faculty scene, a significant fact stands out. Although the Normal was established to train teachers, liberal arts in time assumed a dominant role. Though the faculty aspired for years to make the institution a strictly professional school, as in law or medicine or engineering, and even persuaded the State Board to their point of view, the experiment failed, and the school developed a high-grade liberal arts curriculum that led to its becoming a college, and to a faculty of national prestige.

It is surprising to discover that, in this teachers college, the names that gave it national eminence came largely (though not exclusively) from the liberal arts rather than the professional education side. Such were McFarlane and Jefferson in geography, David Eugene

Smith and Lyman and Stone in mathematics, D'Ooge in the classical languages and Ford in the modern, Strong in the physical sciences and Sherzer in the biological, Harrold in English literature. At the same time it is noteworthy that these men were as fully imbued with the high importance of the role of the teacher as were those in the pedagogical area. Indeed, the school and college textbooks that flowed from the pens of McFarlane, Jefferson, Smith, Lyman, Stone and D'Ooge received nationwide acceptance.

At the same time, the professional side was also attracting attention. Wilbur Bowen contributed importantly to the field of physical education and health; his textbook in anatomy was revised repeatedly long after his death, and is still in use. Charles Hoyt contributed substantially to the history of education. And Charles Elliot established the first normal college program in the nation for the training of handicapped children.

A second noteworthy aspect of the Normal faculty was the role played by women. Free from the long-standing prejudice in major institutions of learning against women on the faculty, the Normal from the first benefited by this. Abigail Rogers, first Preceptress of the Normal School, was known as an ardent and determined pioneer in the movement to open the doors of higher education to women. Julia Anne King, as preceptress and later first head of the Department of History and Social Sciences, made a lasting impression on the campus and became recognized as one of the most effective educators in the state. Alma Blount, English scholar, was an early holder of the PhD degree, and became widely known for her textbooks.

Estelle Downing, also in English, was not only an excellent teacher but a crusader for peace and international understanding. Genevieve Walton, head librarian, made a lasting impression on the library profession of Michigan. Lucy Osband, in biology, frail but dynamic and with vision beyond her area of instruction, deserved the lion's share of credit for the creation of a department of physical education. The list could be greatly expanded.

As for the students, the doors of the Normal were from the first open to both men and women, and to all cultures and races. The image of "Ypsi" as a girls' school, fostered by the demand of society for women teachers and enlivened by the nocturnal influx of males from the nearby University of Michigan (an institution that did not admit women until 1870, and whose alumni for the next half cen-

ture took pride in returning their sons to a “man’s” school), became less and less true as the programs in industrial arts and physical education developed, and with the return to school of war veterans. The latter factor, not important after the Civil War because relatively few returned to the classroom, became important after the first World War and decisive after World War II.

For a century, the Normal served as an opportunity for young people to acquire a college education at minimal cost, and administrative policy was at great pains to retain this distinction. Tuition was kept relatively low and, as dormitories came into the picture, rates were kept to a minimum. This policy was without doubt inspired in large part because teachers for the public schools were drawn largely from the middle and lower economic classes.

The tremendous influx of students that has taken place since World War II has affected one institutional policy of considerable significance. The traditional view was one of sympathy and patience for the border-line student. Pressures of numbers and costs today have modified the practice and shortened the patience, but the philosophy persists.

A word should be added concerning the Purpose. The Normal became a nationally known and highly respected teacher-preparation institution. But the history of the institution reveals that its growth and expansion took place in response to the felt needs of the society it served. It has not been the product of formal planning in advance. Thus, with greatly increased demands of the post-war years, involving a great variety of student abilities and ambitions and a corresponding variety of social needs to be met, its early identity has merged with the broader purposes of a university.

