

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# MAYHEW, BELLOWS, ESTABROOK

1865–1880

*David Porter Mayhew, 1865–1870*

Upon the resignation of Principal Welch, administrative duties were distributed among the faculty, with the professor of natural sciences, D. P. Mayhew, acting head of the school. The following June (at age 48) he was made principal and served in this capacity until his retirement in 1871.

David Porter Mayhew came to Normal in 1856 to replace Professor Fiske who, upon the opening of the new Michigan Agricultural College at East Lansing, had accepted a position there as professor of chemistry. Mayhew, born in New York, was a graduate of Union College, having been prepared for college by the well-known divine, David Porter.<sup>1</sup> He had been head of the Lowville Academy at Lowville, New York, taught for a year in the Cleveland public schools, and served for a year as superintendent of the Columbus, Ohio, schools, resigning to take the position at Normal in January 1856.<sup>2</sup>

The *Detroit Daily Post* expressed the general approval:

This is, in all respects, a fit appointment. Prof. Mayhew has been connected with the Normal School for a number of years, is an enthusiast in his work, and in every respect capable. The State is to be congratulated on having this important institution under such excellent management.

Principal Mayhew's chief contribution lay in his strong appeal as a Christian gentleman, a gentle, earnest personality, and his skill as a teacher. To the students his was a "cheerful and hopeful disposition. He was always the same. He made no one his enemy; everyone his friend. New students, appearing lonely or discouraged, became the objects of his thoughtful care. He loved children, and understood and sympathized with child nature. The children of the Practice School always greeted his entrance with demonstrations of pleasure . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Upon retiring in 1871, he moved to Detroit. He was appointed by Governor Bagley in 1874 for the few months remaining in a term on the State Board of Education. In Detroit, he interested himself in the problem of rehabilitating criminals, giving a series of lectures in psychology to the inmates of the Detroit Reformatory, also for a reformatory in Elmira, New York.

Upon his death in 1887, he was eulogized for his personal character and his superior ability as a teacher. The student paper spoke of him as a teacher who loved his work and was strongly attached to his students. According to his dying request, his pallbearers were selected from them. J. M. B. Sill, on the staff at the time and later to become principal, spoke of Mayhew as "a Christian gentleman, full of the child-like spirit."

*Charles Fitz Roy Bellows, 1870-1871*

Upon the retirement of Mayhew the State Board bought time for the decision on a successor by appointing C. F. R. Bellows, a member of the faculty, as acting principal.

Bellows, who came to Normal first as a student, witnessed the inauguration of Principal Welch, and graduated with the second class ('55). Born in New Hampshire, he came to Michigan at a very early age, his parents settling in Kalamazoo county. He spent several years in public school work, organizing the graded schools at Constantine, Michigan, teaching in Mashawanka, Indiana, and superintending the schools of Decatur, Michigan. He became the first County Superintendent of Van Buren County. Entering the Engineering School of the University of Michigan, he graduated in Civil Engineering in 1865. In 1867, he came to Normal to teach mathematics, and remained 24 years.

In the course of his years at Normal he published a dozen textbooks on mathematics, including a manual on surveying. He also published a journal called *The School*, whose life extended from 1872 to at least 1876.

A single year as acting principal would hardly be expected to produce developments of lasting importance. It was during this year, however, that the position of Director of the School of Observation and Practice was created, and Daniel Putnam appointed. This year also saw a lively discussion of the criticism that Normal was failing to give its students adequate professional training and experience. The discussion culminated, in the following year (under Principal Estabrook), in an arrangement with the Ypsilanti School Board whereby grades below high school were made available to Normal students for observation and practice.

Interest in Bellows' career at Normal centers about his emphasis on professional training. Dissatisfaction of the faculty (and a sore point with critics of Normal) over the time and energy devoted to instruction in academic areas, to the exclusion of professional training, culminated in the experiment of 1878 whereby an effort was made to exclude all academic work from the Normal and make it a strictly professional school. The experiment was abandoned within two years, but Bellows continued to fight for a strong professional emphasis. While acting principal, he had made a formal charge. He asserted:

The people of Michigan, in their collective capacity, imagine that their Normal School is an institution for the specific purpose of teaching young men and women *the art of teaching*. If they knew that its pupils were merely or chiefly taught the things which can be just as well learned in any public high school in the state, they might not feel willing to spend \$10,000 a year upon something that has no real existence.<sup>4</sup>

In the years following, Bellows appears to have become fanatical in his devotion to the cause, and after the rejection of the experiment in 1880 he insisted on conducting his classes in mathematics as courses in methods rather than subject matter. He described his method of teaching as follows:

The work was carried on by lecture, the students taking notes. The manner of it was very much after the usual form of institute work. Day by day

review was had of the work of the previous day and, from time to time, of larger parts of the ground gone over. No particular textbook was used, but reference was had to any arithmetic the student might have.

Bellows helped to form a faculty club called the Pedagogical Society, "with a view," he said, "to promoting professional enthusiasm in the faculty as a whole, and thereby conserving the professional enthusiasm in the faculty as a whole, and thereby conserving the professional welfare of the school at large." This organization was particularly active in the years 1890–1895. Serious discussions and carefully prepared papers, many published, marked its existence.<sup>5</sup>

With the arrival of Principal Sill in 1866, Bellows experienced definite administrative opposition to his emphasis on professional training in academic courses. In 1890, the State Board became sufficiently concerned to send a committee of two of its members (Samuel S. Babcock and James M. Ballou) to Ypsilanti to discuss the matter with him. Subsequently, in response to his own request for criticism, Bellows received the following statement signed by Ballou:

In regard to teachers' academic reviews, the committee on courses of study understand it to mean the assignment of lessons to the class and a recitation by the class of the lessons assigned. I call the work you were doing purely professional work. No lessons assigned, no recitations. All the work done by the teacher with now and then a drawing out question of the class . . . We desire to have the academic work the sharpest kind of a review of what is in arithmetic. Not original methods, devices or solutions.

The Board requested Bellows to adopt a textbook or resign. He did neither. In 1891, he was dismissed.

The exit of Bellows from Normal led to developments that were certainly unanticipated by either Bellows or the Board. By sheer coincidence citizens of Mount Pleasant, Michigan, were at this time organizing an "Improvement" association. They learned that Bellows had gone to Marquette in Michigan's Upper Peninsula in the summer of 1891 hoping to organize a movement for a normal school there. The citizens, now organized as the Mount Pleasant Improvement Company, decided that a normal school would be an excellent project for Mount Pleasant. They approached Bellows and, in 1892, he came to Mount Pleasant as Principal and Surveyor for the Company. It was Bellows who, in the summer of that year, surveyed the land for the original campus and, in the fall, presided at the

opening of the school. He brought in as his vice-principal a young graduate of Normal, Stratton D. Brooks, who would eventually achieve national recognition as, in succession, Superintendent of Schools in Cleveland and in Boston; President of the University of Oklahoma, and President of the University of Missouri.

Three years later the State was persuaded to take over this school.<sup>6</sup> Bellows stayed on, becoming thereby the first principal of the Central State Normal School (now Central Michigan University). At this point the State Board found itself in the position of having to support as principal of one of its two normal schools a man whom they had fired as professor. Furthermore, he remained resolutely loyal to his concept of what a normal school should be.

Bellows resigned at the end of the year. He apparently engaged in a number of educational activities during the next few years. In 1902, under President Jones, he returned to Normal (now a college) as a teacher of mathematics. A year later he was paralyzed by a stroke; in 1907 he died.

The story of Professor-Principal Bellows epitomized the battle that was waged with so much feeling for so many years over the question of whether Normal should become an exclusively professional institution. Time alone could bring the decisive answer. As we look back, it becomes clear that the cause that Bellows championed must fail—that even while he fought, forces were gathering that must prevail. With the rapid development of the high school the academic needs of the high school teacher had to be met. He needed to be well grounded in the subject matter that he would teach, and at the high school level this meant knowledge of one's subject beyond that which the pupils would acquire. If Bellows had seen the developing situation in its broader aspect he might well have avoided the trap which caused him so much unhappiness. It was this pressure, and Normal's response to it, that led to Normal's status as a four-year college, and paved the way for the outstanding work of her liberal arts faculty in the years that followed.

*Joseph Estabrook, 1871–1880*

The agitation for making Normal into an exclusively professional training institution came to a head under the principalship of Joseph Estabrook.<sup>7</sup>

Involved in the argument was the generally-recognized fact that the demand for trained teachers far outran Normal's capacity to meet it. To relieve the student of all academic work and use the whole time for professional training would enable him to complete the course in a considerably shorter time, and thus serve to increase Normal's output. Another means of increasing teacher output would be to establish more normal schools in the State. Thus the Estabrook decade was confronted with two major questions—one relating to the true function of the school, the other to its monopoly in teacher training.

Joseph Estabrook became principal of Normal at the age of 51. A descendant and namesake of a very early settler from Middlesex County, England, and well-known preacher in Concord, Massachusetts, he was born in Bath, New Hampshire. He came with his parents to Clinton, Michigan, when he was 18 and prepared for college at the Tecumseh branch of the University of Michigan. Oberlin College was his choice, where he earned the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Science. This same institution conferred upon him the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree toward the close of his life.

Prior to coming to Normal he had held several administrative positions: principal of the Union School in Ypsilanti (1852), superintendent of the Ypsilanti Public Schools (1853–1866), and superintendent of schools at East Saginaw (1866–1871) where he organized the first public schools. The year prior to his selection as Normal's principal he had been elected to the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan, which office he retained until 1878. In 1880, he resigned from Normal and accepted an offer as principal of the Normal Department at Olivet College. In 1886, he was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction, a post that he occupied for the next four years. Returning to Olivet in 1890, he devoted the brief four years left him to the College and the Congregational Church, serving as a delegate to the latter's National Council in 1892.

We are fortunate in the possession of an intimate description of Normal during the early years of Estabrook's principalship, written by an Englishman, Bernard Bigsby, who spent some time on the campus, visited classes, and made detailed notes of his impressions.<sup>8</sup> Speaking of Ypsilanti, he said:

Peeping out among the wooded slopes of the picturesque banks of the Huron—more than half hid in the delicious groves of fruit trees, whose

white blossoms contrast pleasantly with the deep green of the spring-born foliage, nestles the little rustic town—I beg pardon, city—of Ypsilanti.

After highly complimentary remarks concerning classroom instruction in the several areas of learning, he touched upon what he termed Normal's Achilles heel, which was a distortion in the spelling of words that was "shocking." Bigsby continued:

I called the Principal's attention to this, and he very candidly confessed the weakness, but attributed it to the lack of soundness in the teaching of the elementary schools. He also declared himself determined to stop the evil . . .

But he closed his article on a highly sympathetic note:

. . . wherever in after years I may be tossing about the world, the sunny recollections of those bright, earnest faces, the freshness of that little Western school-world, the openhanded American hospitality of the people, and the geniality of the professors, will write in 'letters of white' on the tables of my memory the unforgettten name of Ypsilanti.

The era of Principal Estabrook may be summarized by saying that, in the face of urgent need for more trained teachers as well as for improved quality of training, proposals for meeting the former were, on understandable grounds, resisted; for the latter, encouraged. That the quality of professional training was improved should not be overlooked in evaluating the period.

The other positive contribution of Joseph Estabrook lay in a character and personality that made a strong appeal to the public of his time. His colleague, Daniel Putnam, spoke of him thus:

The most potent element of his power in the school was his own personality . . . First of all he was blessed with abounding physical vitality . . . Next, with a well-developed intellect, he was blessed with unusual depth and strength of emotional nature . . . Beyond these qualities he had an abiding faith in goodness and in God; and a profound spiritual apprehension and experience which enabled him to lay fast hold upon the unseen and eternal, and to make them real in his daily life . . . No teacher ever connected with the school was more loved, was remembered with kindlier feelings, or greeted wherever he went, with warmer or more sincere words of personal regard.

Joseph Estabrook died in September of 1894, in Olivet where the last fourteen years of his life were spent. Teacher, preacher (it was said that few pulpits in southern Michigan had not heard his voice), Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Regent of the University of Michigan, his influence in his own state had been widely felt. In a memorial service in Ypsilanti, held in the Methodist church, "every seat and every standing-space was occupied, and many who came later could not get inside the doors."