

CHAPTER EIGHT

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Concern for the physical well-being of the students developed within a few years after the opening of the school. Agitation for a gymnasium began in 1859. In its report for that year the Board of Visitors recommended that a gymnasium be provided. After praising the institution highly, the Board said:

But we beg leave to suggest one modification, or rather addition to what facilities are now afforded. We think . . . that some provision should be made by the State for a *Gymnasium*. If we mistake not, there is a decided want of appropriate physical exercise among the pupils, and we would call your attention particularly to the question whether the frequent cases of mortality among students soon after graduating, may not arise from a like cause, and whether, even if, in the case of this single School, the evil results are not so serious as this question contemplates, they are not sufficiently so to make a small outlay in furnishing a suitable place for physical exercise, a measure of practical wisdom and sound economy.

Principal Welch, in his report for the following year, discussed the matter at some length. Noting that the subject of physical education was receiving nation-wide attention, he said:

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this movement. Thousands of valuable lives have been sacrificed, and scarcely any one has passed uninjured through the terrible ordeal of close and crowded rooms, long sittings, excessive mental effort and deficient exercise. Most of the graduates of our High Schools and Colleges carry with them as mementos of their School days, disordered stomachs, curved spines, enfeebled bodies or some nervous weakness, to embitter their lives and to rob education itself of much of its value. Nor can study be prosecuted with due success while the health and vigor of the body are so little cared for. Hour after hour is daily wasted in our Schools, in listless and futile efforts at study,

when, through mere weariness of the body, the sympathizing mind has lost its power of steady application. A skillful gymnastic drill of a few minutes would awaken the energies, quicken the sluggish circulation, and lend a new life and interest to the whole mental action. We owe it to our children, to the cause of popular education, and the humane spirit of our Christian civilization to remedy this too long neglected defect in our educational institutions.

Welch added that "more than a hundred teachers go forth annually from Normal. If these were thoroughly trained in the art of physical education, they in turn would 'diffuse the art' to all of the teachers in this State." Asserting that if it had not been for the disastrous fire of October, 1859, which destroyed the Normal building, the Board could have provided a gymnasium building, Welch requested an appropriation of \$1,000. There was no response.

Because of the failure of the State to provide for this need, self-help was resorted to. Welch painted a graphic picture:

Early in the last spring term an appeal was made to the young men of the school for aid in putting up suitable apparatus. In response, those who were accustomed to the use of carpenter's tools came cheerfully forward and we soon had a horizontal bar and ladders erected in the open air. The young men were then divided into three classes, which were placed, respectively, under Messrs. Sill (English Grammar and Analysis), Miller (Modern Language) and Welch (Principal), for daily gymnastic instruction. In the meantime, Mrs. Aldrich (Preceptress) took advantage of the short recesses which occur between recitations, to give the young ladies systematic manual exercises. These exercises were taken simultaneously, by the entire department, the pupils standing by their desks and imitating, in concert, the movements of the teacher.

And he added:

A marked improvement in recitations, in order and quiet, as well as in alertness of step and erectness of figure, were among the benefits which the students derived from these simple lessons.

But Normal was intent on having a physical education building, and in 1863 a building there was. The report of the State Board for that year reads:

. . . an additional building was erected, the upper story of which affords a spacious and convenient gymnasium, while the lower part gives a large

and secure woodroom and two sets of privy closets. The cost of this building was \$1,250.00, and the entire expense of its erection has been met without asking of the State one dollar of extra appropriation.¹

It was this building that provided the fuel for the second fire on the Normal campus, August 1, 1873. But for ten years Normal enjoyed a gymnasium.

The following years saw intermittent attempts to carry on a program of physical exercise. It was done in the study halls and the larger classrooms. In the late 1880's a room in the basement of the south wing of Old Main was outfitted with some apparatus, and voluntary activity carried on. With the coming of Principal Sill (1886), however, a serious effort was made to secure a new gymnasium building.

In his report for 1892, Sill stated that Normal had no suitable facilities either for exercise or for instruction in physical training, and he pointed out that the demand for trained teachers in this area was growing more urgent. "We need," he said, "a special instructor in physical training and we also need more play and exercise grounds and a suitable gymnasium." He added:

The meeting of these wants is urged upon purely pedagogical grounds. No education can be deemed complete whose course of training has neglected the body and concerned itself only with the mental and moral development of the pupil . . . But, in addition to its pedagogical aspects there is another and immediately practical view. Our pupils are largely the sons and daughters of farmers. They are accustomed to vigorous exercise and plenty of it. They are remarkably earnest, faithful and laborious students. The new conditions of sedentary life tell most unfortunately upon the health and strength of many.

The Board of Visitors of the following year (1893) gave it support:

It would seem to your committee that the great need of the State Normal school of the great educational State of Michigan, is a physical training department . . . The arguments in favor of this department are so many and so obvious that your committee would be trespassing upon common intelligence to herein state them. Let our great Normal school, whose roots are watered by the life of the State, have a physical training department, that the teachers coming from its portals may go forth truly and healthfully educated.

The Legislature was not to be easily persuaded, however, and much credit is due that remarkable woman, Mrs. Lucy Osband, head of the Natural Science Department, for playing a decisive role. The story is graphically told by her daughter, Marna:

. . . a mass meeting of the students was held in the chapel when the legislature spent the evening here after visiting the University. The principal (Mr. Sill) appointed Professor George and Professor Barbour to speak in behalf of the building. Mrs. Osband knew enough of legislators to know that speeches would have no effect and prepared a dozen exceptionally skilled girls directed by Miss Grace Hall to put on a sample of what the actual classwork was. Professor Sill, always upset by anything unusual, refused to allow them to show because it would cause so much confusion to get the visitors off the stage and into the front seats . . . Then, for one of the few times in her life, Mrs. Osband resorted to woman's weapon—she cried. So Professor Sill relented. The speeches, as she knew would happen, proved ineffective. Members of the legislature spoke in turn and told how they got exercise by sawing wood for their board, etc. (although coal had taken the place of wood). The affair fell flat until the dozen pretty girls, graded as to height, came on the stage. At their superb military marching, the legislature pricked up their ears and showed interest. The Indian Club drill had them stirred and the dumb-bell drill made them enthusiastic. "If that is what you mean by physical education—well, that was something worth while." Professor Sill and the state board president came to Mrs. Osband later and told her that her girls had almost surely won the building.²

Mrs. Osband proceeded to correspond with Dr. Sargeant at Harvard and Dr. Luther Gulick at Springfield, Massachusetts, regarding building plans. Dr. Gulick sent her the detailed plans for his physical education building at Springfield, just completed, and considered the finest in the country.

Normal's gymnasium was dedicated May 18, 1894, and her protege, Wilbur Bowen, made head of the new department. The Board of Visitors expressed its satisfaction:

The gymnasium . . . is a magnificent testimonial of educational progress in our own beloved State and a necessary addition to the school essentials . . . the sons and daughters of Michigan may with pardonable pride gaze upon the institution so well equipped, so ably managed, and so well attended, and exclaim "Behold the beauty and the strength of our State!"

This building (with an addition in 1914) served the institution for 71 years. The Legislative appropriation was for \$20,000; the site was donated by the citizens of Ypsilanti. Thus the Department of Physical Education came into being.

Credit should also go to Austin George, Director of the Training School, whose efforts were recognized by the assignment to give the dedication address. In a letter to Governor Rich thanking him for signing the appropriation bill, George made a revealing comment when he said, "we do not desire a 'gym' in the ordinary sense of the term, but in a broader, higher and pedagogical sense. If the pedagogical aspects of the case had not been paramount, we should not have asked for the appropriation—much as we value the mere gymnastic or athletic features, and their applications to the present needs of our students."³

Principal Boone, who had taken over the reins in the fall of 1893, noted another unique feature, namely, a policy of making baths and other privileges of the gymnasium free, "a novel one," he said, "among school gymnasiums." He stated a new policy, that a minimum amount of practice was to be required of *all* students at some time during their course.

Sixteen years later the Board of Visitors of 1910 complained that the existing gymnasium was entirely too small, that it afforded opportunity for less than two-thirds of the student body to receive its benefits. In 1912, President Charles McKenny, in his first annual report, requested \$35,000 for an addition. The following year the Legislature accepted McKenny's proposal for a building program to extend over a period of seven or eight years, one of the first items of which was an addition to the gymnasium. This was completed on 1914.

The first head of the Physical Education Department was Wilbur P. Bowen. From 1886, when he graduated from Normal in the shorter Latin course, until 1891 Bowen had assisted Professor Bellows in mathematics. Influenced by Mrs. Osband, he became interested in the potentialities of physical education and accepted an offer from the University of Nebraska to become Director of Gymnasium. In 1894, he returned to Normal to head the new department. From 1901 to 1903, on leave, he studied in the Medical School at Ann Arbor, earned the degree of master of science and taught physiology at U-M. He returned to Normal in 1903 to continue as head of the department, and remained in this position until his death in 1928.

Bowen's interest in the field of physical education took a scientific turn. His first book, published in 1898, was titled *A Teachers Course in Physical Training*. From 1909 he wrote prolifically. *Mechanics of Bodily Exercise, Action of the Muscles*, and *The Theory and Practice of Organized Play* (with Elmer Mitchell), were three of his books. His outstanding work, however, first published in 1919, was a textbook in *Applied Anatomy and Kinesiology*. This book went through many editions and was used in colleges and universities from coast to coast. Long after his death it continued to be used. In 1934, a fifth edition, revised by his erstwhile colleagues, Ruth and Elton Rynearson, was published and went through several reprintings. In 1949, a sixth edition, revised by Henry A. Stone of the University of California at Berkeley, appeared, followed in 1953 by a seventh edition.

The offerings of the new department included two years of practice and one term of theory. In the words of the announcement, the program was designed "to improve the physical condition of students, and prepare them to carry on the various lines of Physical Education in the public schools." In addition, students desiring to become special teachers in this area could get advanced work in theory, practice, and teaching. One semester was devoted to the Swedish system (a graduated program of formal drills), one to German exercises (emphasis on individual exercises on apparatus). A course was devoted to *Method in Physical Training* ("the history and leading features of the principal systems of Physical Training, application of educational principles to the teaching of the subject, and school Hygiene"). Another course was given in *Applied Anatomy*.

In 1921, a four-year program for specializing students was first offered. It led to the bachelor of science degree. Activity courses for men and women were provided. Those for women included gymnastics, school games, dancing, swimming, and tennis; for men, track and field sports, basketball, cross country running, and football. The academic courses for both men and women came under two general headings: *Human Anatomy and Physiology*, and *Physical Education* (courses in theory of the several sports, methods of instruction, planning of programs of work in physical education). Included in the latter category was a course in the *History and Literature of Physical Education*, one dealing with the Boy Scout movement, and one in practice teaching.

The department was also responsible for competitive athletics. An

official statement of long-standing was still being used in 1960. It read: The department of physical education conducts athletic sports for students along three lines: (1) intercollegiate, (2) intramural and (3) recreational. The scope was broad enough to include all able-bodied students. It appears to represent the natural evolution of the original concept of an annual Field Day which provided intercollegiate competition in a variety of track and field sports, sports which were based on individual competition. The first of these had been held in 1890 and the idea was carried over into the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association, which Normal joined in 1892 (along with Albion, Olivet, Hillsdale, and Michigan Agricultural Colleges).⁴

During most of the Bowen regime, the women's program had been under the direction of a woman member of the staff. Mrs. Fannie Cheever Burton held this position from the first year of the department. In 1914, she organized the Physical Education Club (co-educational). In 1923, she resigned to become Assistant to the Dean of Women, remaining in this post until the last year of her life (1935). Mrs. Burton was a native of Ypsilanti and a graduate of Normal ('83, honorary M.Pd. '04).

The position of director of the women's division remained open until the appointment of Ruth L. Boughner in 1941.

Miss Boughner, a member of the department since 1920, had been active in camping and Red Cross work, and taught with marked success courses in *Applied Anatomy*, *Kinesiology*, and *Physiology of Nutrition*. In 1959, Miss Boughner was honored by the Michigan Association of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. Upon her retirement in 1952, Augusta M. Harris was appointed.

Miss Harris was a Normal alumna and had been a member of the department since 1928. She was instrumental in expanding the curriculum to include courses in recreation (1950). She became an acknowledged authority in the area of social dancing, served as president of the Michigan Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Athletics, and in 1961 was given the honor award by that body for outstanding service to the field of physical education.

For 20 years after Bowen's death (1928) the curriculum had remained static. Along side it, however, since 1927 a small area of academic-type course work had existed as the Department of Health Education. This comprised courses in personal health and in the promotion and teaching of health in the public schools. It was headed, and largely taught, by the Director of the Student Health Service

(Dr. Glenadine Snow, the college physician). In 1948, this department was assimilated into the Department of Physical Education and Health. Two years later, upon the adoption of the program in recreation, it became the Department of Physical Education, Health, and Recreation.

But another area of responsibility had always been a part of the work of the department, namely, competitive athletics. This was recognized in the departmental name in 1959, at the cost of a truly cumbersome title—Department of Physical Education, Health, Recreation, and Athletics.

In 1966, the title was shortened to its present form—Health, Physical Education and Recreation. At the same time, a position that had earlier existed for a time was revived, that of Athletic Director and Professor of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. The responsibility, however, included intramural sports as well as intercollegiate athletics.

In 1960, consequent upon the designation of Normal as a university, the department was placed within the newly-formed College of Education, where it functions at the present time.

In 1945, President Munson secured approval by the State Board for plans for a Woman's Gymnasium, to cost \$350,000. Greatly increased enrollments after the second World War finally persuaded the Legislature to act, and architects were named to draw plans for the proposed "Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Athletic Plant." A decade later (December, 1955) the first unit of this plan was completed, a magnificent field house containing facilities for indoor track and basketball, practice facilities for football, baseball, golf, and a spectator seating capacity of more than 3,700. It was named, fittingly, Bowen Field House.

In 1965, the remainder of the plan moved the department entirely out of its aging quarters. The Warner Gymnasium, with modern equipment and provisions for flexibility of use, included a vast assembly room which could be readily partitioned into several activity rooms. A magnificent swimming pool, now called a natatorium, was provided with ample spectator facilities. Classrooms helped to relieve the current acute shortage.

Wilbur Bowen died in 1928. His standing in the world of physical education was well stated by R. Tait McKenzie, Director of the Department of Physical Education at the University of Pennsylvania, when he said:

Dr. Bowen possessed the advantage of a practical knowledge of his work, with a gift of stating it in lucid English and with unbounded enthusiasm and industry. His earliest work on Blood Pressure demonstrated the scientific trend of his mind and his classic work on Kinesiology . . . must always remain the authority on the subject.⁵

In 1931, Bowen's successor was chosen from the staff of the department. Joseph H. McCulloch had come to Normal in 1918 as coach of football, basketball, baseball, track and tennis. He was a graduate of the Springfield College of Physical Education, the University of Michigan and Columbia. During his tenure as head of Normal's Department of Physical Education, he had the satisfaction of seeing many of his graduates serve in important positions of leadership. In World War II, he was eagerly sought by the military services to head programs of physical fitness.

Upon McCulloch's retirement in 1956, another replacement from the staff was made. Lloyd W. Olds, a native of Ypsilanti and a Normal graduate ('16), had been with the department since 1921. His first major contribution was the organization of an intramural athletic program to include every student. Dynamic, enthusiastic, impetuous, Olds pursued a career filled with action, achievement, and an ever-widening field of interest. Thanks to Olds, track and field became so successful that it stamped Normal as a national power in small college intercollegiate competition, and in occasional individual national champions. Cross-country running was elevated to the status of a major sport. The public schools of Michigan felt his influence in the organizing of state meets. He was instrumental in organizing the first state basketball tournament. At the national level he proved to be much in demand as a track coach, assisting with the American Olympic teams of 1932 and 1936, coaching an American-Scandinavian team in its tour of Europe (1935), serving as chairman of the Pan-American Track and Field committee of the Pan-American Athletic Association (1937), manager of the Pan-American team that competed in Mexico (1957). During World War II he had served as a lieutenant commander, in charge of the Navy's physical fitness program, 11th Naval District. Shortly after becoming head of Normal's department, he was called by the State Department to serve as consultant and lecturer for American forces of occupation, first in Europe, then in the Far East.

At Normal, upon returning from World War II service, he with-

drew from coaching to give his full attention to the revival and expansion of the intramural program—an emphasis that he had become converted to in his apprenticeship days under Wilbur Bowen.

Retiring in 1963, Olds was succeeded by another Bowen (unrelated, however, to the earlier head). Keith C. Bowen, a doctoral product of the University of Indiana, was brought to Eastern from Montana State College at Bozeman. In 1967 Bowen resigned.

A clear-cut division of functions was made with the establishment of a Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. This was headed by F. L. (Frosty) Ferzacca, who came to Eastern from Northern Michigan University. The Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation was headed by Patric (cq) L. Cavanaugh, who held a similar post at the University of Detroit.

The distinguished record in physical training and athletics that this department achieved owes much to the wise and able leadership of its first head, Wilbur P. Bowen. His emphasis on health, on physical activity and competition for all as well as on intercollegiate competition, and his scientific approach to problems in his field have characterized the department through the years. His contributions to physical education in anatomy and kinesiology were outstanding. In athletic prowess, credit must go to Lloyd Olds for making Normal nationally known and respected as a track power. Recognition by the State Legislature of the important role that physical education at Normal played in the life of the State came, belatedly but amply, in appropriations of the 1960's for the splendid facilities now standing on the campus.