

**A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY  
OF THE MICHIGAN STATE  
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION**

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A Sketch of the History of the Michigan State Teachers' Association by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION**



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*A Sketch of the History*

OF THE

MICHIGAN

*STATE*

**Teachers' Association.**

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*OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION,*

Elected December 28th, 1876.

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*This article, a History of the State Teachers' Association, is all that the funds of the Society enabled them to publish. A full synopsis of the proceedings at the Lansing meeting has, however, been published in the State Superintendent's Report, which can be had on application to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, at Lansing.*

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Of the State Normal School,

And presented at the meeting of the Association held  
at LANSING, December 27th, 1876.

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**PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATION.**

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THIS paper owes its existence to the following resolution, adopted by the Association at its meeting in Grand Rapids, December, 1875:

*Resolved*, That Prof. D. Putnam be appointed to prepare a History of this Association, to be read at the next Annual Meeting."

In accordance with the wishes of the Association, an effort has been made, to give as complete a sketch of this history as limited time and the material at hand would permit. No one can be as sensitively aware of its imperfections as the writer. It is not all that he desired and hoped to make it, nor all that the importance and interest of the subject might justly demand; but the pressure of other labors, and the difficulty of obtaining reliable information upon some points, have prevented him from doing more or better. It will be remembered also that the sketch has been drawn out by command, and not thrust unasked upon an unwilling public.



## I.

### Introductory.

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The French occupied portions of the territory of the present State of Michigan during a period of nearly one hundred and fifty years. So far as one can ascertain, very little was done for education within this time. In 1703, Cadillac, Commandant at Detroit, urged the establishment of "a Seminary for the common instruction of French and Indian children," but no record of the existence of such a school can be found. In 1755, Vaudreuil proposed to employ, without expense to the home government, "two sisters of the Congregation" to teach the children of the then little village of Detroit. It is uncertain whether this proposition was carried into effect.

In 1760, the territory passed into the hands of the English, but it does not appear that any public provision for schools was made during their occupancy.

By the treaty of 1783, Michigan was ceded to the United States with the other portions of the great Northwest territory. In 1785, the sixteenth section of each township was pledged by the general government for the support of schools, and this pledge was reaffirmed in the celebrated ordinance of 1787.

The Territory of Michigan was organized in 1805, and the same section was set apart for educational purposes. The first school law, enacted by the Territorial authorities in 1809, unfortunately has not been preserved, and very little can be learned of the condition of educational affairs during several subsequent years.

Several private schools existed for a longer or shorter period, and among the teachers in Detroit, in the years

from 1802 to 1816, were Rev. David Bacon, Elizabeth Williams, Angelique Campau, Mr. Payne, Rev. John Monteith, and Mr. Danforth. After the last mentioned date, teachers and private schools were more numerous.

The first extant law in respect to public common schools was passed by the Territorial Council in 1827. This act appears to have been largely copied from the early statutes of Massachusetts. It provided that every township of fifty families should employ "a schoolmaster of good morals to teach children to read and write, and to instruct them in the English and French languages, as well as in Arithmetic, Orthography, and decent behaviour," for six months in a year. Townships of a hundred families were to support a school for more months, and those of two hundred families were required to employ a "Grammar schoolmaster," competent to give instruction in the Latin, French, and English languages.

Michigan was formally admitted as a State in January, 1837, but a State government was recognized as having existed from November, 1835. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution then adopted, but before Congress had determined the question of admission into the Union, the Governor and Legislature, in 1836, appointed Hon. John D. Pierce Superintendent of Public Instruction for the incipient Commonwealth, and directed him to report a school system for the action of the Legislature at its next session. For the purpose of gaining information by personal examination, and by consultation with the best educators of that day, he immediately visited New England, New York, and some other States. In his report of January 1st, 1837, he embodied the results of his examination of the educational systems of these older States, and recommended plans which were, for the most part, adopted by the Legislature.

Mr. Pierce held the office of Superintendent for five years, and labored most industriously and efficiently with

such means as were at his command. He edited and published for two years a "*Journal of Education*," and delivered numerous addresses in different parts of the State.

Mainly through his influence, the first "Educational Convention" in Michigan was held at Detroit, on the third of January, 1838. The convention continued its sessions during three days, and finally organized a society called the MICHIGAN LITERARY INSTITUTE. This society probably died at its birth, as no further records or traces of it can be found. In 1839, Common School Associations were formed in the counties of Calhoun, Branch, St. Joseph, and perhaps in others, but these organizations, so far as appears, accomplished very little.

Several teachers' associations and educational societies were formed during the years 1845 and 1846, while the Hon. Ira Mayhew was Superintendent of Public Instruction. The first Teachers' Institute in the State was held in October, 1846, by the Jackson County Association.

A convention of delegates from the various county societies met at Ann Arbor on the 23d of June, 1847, and organized the MICHIGAN STATE EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY, and made it auxiliary to a society of the same nature formed in the previous year at Chicago. Among those who delivered addresses at this meeting at Ann Arbor were Gen. Cass, Gov. Felch, Hon. Ira Mayhew, and E. C. Scaman, Esq. Among the officers were Rev. G. L. Foster, recently deceased, and Dr. J. A. B. Stone, then as now of Kalamazoo. Two annual meetings were held by this Society, one at Jackson in 1848, and one at Lansing in 1849, and then, apparently, it went "the way of all the earth" and was heard of no more.

Teachers' Institutes were held in the Spring of 1849, under the direction of Mr. Mayhew, at Jonesville, Ann Arbor, and Pontiac. During that year an act of the Legislature was passed providing for the establishment of a Normal School.