

**THE ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN
INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION:
BEING
A RECORD OF ITS DOINGS FOR
54 YEARS, FROM 1830 TILL, 1883**

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CHAS. NORTHEND

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PREFATORY NOTES.

The preparation of this volume was undertaken at the suggestion of Col. Homer B. Sprague, now President of the American Institute of Instruction, who, in common with many others, felt that the doings of this ancient and important Association should be brought into a condensed form, convenient for examination and reference.

The Institute is now the oldest educational organization in this country, if not in the world, and its originators, and speakers at the first meeting, were all men of more than ordinary ability in their respective departments. It has been the author's aim to give a faithful condensed account of each of the fifty-four annual meetings, with the names of the lecturers and their subjects, together with such incidental notes as might from time to time seem appropriate.

Though some of the yearly records are more brief than others, it will be seen that at each annual meeting the time was well improved by lectures, discussions, and business items, and in the same we find abundant evidence that the educators and friends of education in the last half century have well performed their duties and manifested a degree of interest and wisdom, not one whit less than is manifested by some in later times who seem to have felt that education was born with them.

There have been many difficulties in the way of preparing this volume, and some errors will doubtless be met with. The author has found some in the original records,—though very few. It is hoped that the volume will be found helpful to some one who, at a future day, may incline to make a more

complete history, aided by such omitted incidents and facts as may from time to time be brought to light by the appearance of this volume.

When the Institute was organized, it was voted to omit, in the records, all titles except that of Professor and possibly that appropriate to the clerical profession. At that time the title of Professor was not applied to every one who spent a few days in the school-room, nor to one filling the position of itinerating teacher of penmanship or vocal music.

The author of this volume has endeavored to prefix titles to college officers, clergymen, etc., so far as he could learn the facts, trusting that the School-master will pardon the omission of all titles in his case and feel sufficiently honored by honoring his chosen vocation: and if any feel that they have been slighted they may be assured that no slight has been intended.

The volume, with whatever of incompleteness it may have, is commended to teachers and others with the hope that it may lead them gratefully to appreciate the faithful labors of their predecessors and stimulate them to wise and earnest endeavors in carrying onward and upward the work so well inaugurated more than half a century ago, and so faithfully prosecuted till the present time.

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION.

1830-1883.

In the early part of the present century the cause of popular education was in a deplorably low and neglected condition. School-houses were badly located, destitute of architectural beauty, and dilapidated in appearance. School furniture was most meager in quantity, poor in quality, and uncomfortable in structure. Blackboards* and school apparatus, reference books and school libraries, were unknown. Teachers, as a class, were incompetent and poorly paid. Parental indifference and neglect everywhere prevailed. Schools were kept, but in no true sense were they taught. While it was true that general apathy and neglect prevailed, there were a few thoughtful and earnest men who realized the danger from the continuance of such a state of public sentiment and felt the necessity of arousing the popular mind and securing concerted action in the work of change and improvement.

*Blackboards were first introduced in 1829, but were not much used for many years later.

It was under these circumstances that a meeting of teachers and friends of education was held in Columbian Hall, Boston, on the 15th of March, 1830.* The attendance was encouraging, and the meetings were continued four days. The condition and wants of common schools were considered, and a deep feeling prevailed that some steps should be taken for their improvement. Before the sessions closed, a committee was appointed to consider the expediency of forming a permanent association, the aims and efforts of which should be to awaken the public mind to the great importance of popular education. The members of this committee were Ebenezer Bailey, Geo. B. Emerson, B. D. Emerson, A. Andrews, and G. F. Thayer of Boston, Henry K. Oliver of Salem, and J. Wilder of Watertown,—all of Massachusetts,—and for many years distinguished for their interest and labors in the cause of education. The members of this committee met at several different times, and finally decided to prepare a constitution for the permanent organization of an Educational Association, and to call a meeting of teachers and friends of education for discussion and definite action. This meeting was

*A State convention of educators in Connecticut was held in Hartford in 1830. At this, Noah Webster, the lexicographer, presided, and addresses were made by Wm. C. Woodbridge and Pres. Humphrey of Amherst College. A convention of teachers and friends of education was held in Brooklyn, Conn., in 1827, through the influence of the late Rev. S. J. May. But neither of these resulted in a permanent organization.

held in the State House in the city of Boston on the 19th, 20th, 21st, and 22d of August, 1830, in obedience to a call widely extended through the newspapers of the day. The response to the call was very cheering to those interested, and their most sanguine expectations were more than realized. More than three hundred assembled, representing at least eleven different States,—thus indicating that there were in various States, those who were in full sympathy with the object of the meeting, and, as it were, awaiting a call like this.*

The convention was organized by the choice of Hon. Wm. B. Calhoun of Springfield, as chairman, and Geo. B. Emerson and Dr. J. W. McKean of Boston, as secretaries; but Mr. Calhoun being absent, W. Sullivan of Boston was temporary chairman. While a prominent object of the meeting was to consider and act upon articles of a constitution for a permanent organization, the committee very wisely made arrangements for a course of lectures from well-known friends of education. Much of the time of each day was spent in discussing the proposed constitution which was finally adopted with but slight changes, and on the last day of the meeting, the "American Institute of Instruc-

* In 1826 Josiah Holbrook was chiefly instrumental in originating the American Lyceum, which for many years exerted a great and salutary influence in New England; and it is undoubtedly true that this had much to do in awakening the interest which culminated in the formation of the American Institute of Instruction.