

**MANUAL OF EDUCATION : A BRIEF
HISTORY OF THE RHODE ISLAND INSTITUTE
OF INSTRUCTION, INCLUDING A SYNOPSIS
OF ANNUAL AND OTHER MEETINGS, LIST
OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS TOGETHER
WITH THE CONSTITUTION AND CHARTER**

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Manual of Education : A Brief History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction, Including a Synopsis of Annual and Other Meetings, List of Officers and Members Together with the Constitution and Charter by Edwin Martin Stone

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EDWIN MARTIN STONE

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A SYNOPSIS OF ANNUAL AND OTHER MEETINGS,

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BY

EDWIN MARTIN STONE.

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W. S. T.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ISLAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY

P R E F A C E .

The following pages have been written at the request of the *Rhode Island Institute of Instruction*, expressed by vote of its members at the annual meeting in 1871. The publication has been delayed beyond the time originally contemplated, by circumstances not under the author's control. In preparing this volume it has been the aim to present a comprehensive view of the state of education in Rhode Island in the early years of its history, and to trace the progressive steps by which the cause has advanced to its present cheering condition. The founding of the INSTITUTE, under the auspices of far-seeing and guiding minds, was an event the importance of which cannot be over-estimated. It was the embodying of hitherto scattered elements, and imparting to them a power which separately they did not possess. In educating the Public Mind so that it should perceive and feel the duty which society owes to the rising generation; in securing to teaching as a profession, a higher appreciation; in developing just ideas of the relation between intellectual culture and prosperous industry; in awakening a worthy ambition to make the Public Schools the most efficient auxiliaries to the higher institutions of learning; and in demanding that all which science reveals, experience approves, and moral principle enforces, shall be made subsidiary to popular education; the INSTITUTE has borne a part upon which its members may

look with entire satisfaction. And if there be truth in the often-quoted proverb, "coming events cast their shadows before," there is foundation for the belief that the future glory of its work will far surpass the brightness of its past.

To the Teachers and Friends of Education in Rhode Island this "Brief History" is respectfully inscribed, with the hope that it may prove an acceptable contribution to a Cause which is now engaging so earnestly their hearts and hands.

E. M. S.

NOVEMBER, 1874.



HISTORY.



PRELIMINARY to the history of the RHODE ISLAND INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION, it will be proper to glance at the condition of Education in the early days of the Colony of Rhode Island, and the rise and progress of her Public School System.

If the Cause of Public Education in Rhode Island, now so universally popular, did not at an early day engage the attention of the Body Politic here, as in other Colonies, the neglect, seeming or real, should be attributed rather to the peculiar circumstances under which this Colony was settled than to a want of appreciation of good learning. It will be borne in mind when making a contrast between the early educational condition of Rhode Island and that of her neighbor Colonies, that she labored under difficulties which constituted no part of their experience; and that while the settlements at Plymouth, Boston, Salem and New Haven, were begun with organized bodies of men, bringing with them means for at once establishing the Church and the School House, our Colony Life was begun by a handful of Refugees from their first chosen home in the Bay Colony, too few in numbers to do more at the outstart than to subdue enough of the wilderness to make for themselves an unenviable home; too poor to command at the moment and put in operation the agencies of a high civilization; and too much occupied in protecting themselves against aboriginal and other dangers to establish, as a first step, the Public School and the University.

Had they been differently situated, a different aspect would doubtless have been put upon the face of things in these Plantations. The Leader of the Conscience Band who fled first to Seekonk, and then, at the suggestion of the friendly Winslow, and possibly of the no less friendly Winthrop, removed to a spot he named Providence,—was a profound scholar, and could not but have had a just comprehension of the importance of a practical education to a rising community. But the children of the Plantation Colony, for several years after its founders arrived here, must have been so few as hardly to have suggested the immediate necessity of a school,* while the pressing demands upon the time and services of Williams in adjusting local vexations and in serving the welfare of a neighboring Colony, put it out of his power to give thought to any plan for establishing a system of popular education. Yet it is not to be assumed that no interest was felt here or elsewhere in the Colony on this subject, or that no measures were adopted for the encouragement of education. In 1640, one year after the settlement of Newport was begun, that town invited Mr. Robert Lenthal "to keep a public school for the learning of youth, and for his encouragement there was granted to him and his heirs one hundred acres of land, and four more for a house lot." The town also voted, "that one hundred acres should be laid forth and appropriated for a school, for the encouragement of the poorer sort, to train up their youth in learning."†

These one hundred acres, it is supposed by some, were originally located in what is now the town of Middletown, and in 1661 were exchanged for a tract subsequently known as Newtown, or school land. In 1663, this trust was ordered to

*It should be borne in mind that in 1680 the population of Rhode Island, exclusive of Indians, did not exceed 7,000, and in 1701, sixty-five years after the settlement of Providence, it had increased to only 10,000. Of this population, the largest portion must have been comprised in the settlements at Providence, Newport and Warwick. In other parts of the Colony the necessity for schools could not have been pressing.

† Arnold, 1, 145, 146.

be divided into lots, "and to be sold or loaned on condition that the purchasers should pay to the town treasurer an annual rent to constitute a fund for the schooling and educating of poor children, according to the direction of the town council for the time being."* From 1775 to 1792 there were seventy-eight lots in Newtown, denominated "school lands," for which the town received in rents, \$181.42 per annum.

In 1695, Judge Samuel Sewall, of Boston, conveyed land in the Pettaquamscut Purchase to Trustees, the income of which was to be appropriated to the support of the ministry, and to the instruction of "the children and youths of the above mentioned town of Pettaquamscut,† as well English there settled, or to be settled, as Indians the aboriginal natives and proprietors of the place, to read and write the English language and the rules of grammar." The school was for a long time at Tower Hill, and among the instructors were Constant Southworth, Increase Hewett, and Robert F. Noyes.‡

In the following year (1696) Judge Sewall conveyed to Harvard College land in the same Purchase "for and towards the support and education at said College, of such youths whose parents may not be of sufficient ability to maintain them there, especially such as shall be sent from Pettaquamscut aforesaid, English or Indians."§ In 1765, Thomas Ninigret, commonly known as King Tom, Sachem of the Narragansetts, petitioned the Society for Propagating the Gospel to establish a Free School for the children of the tribe. Ninigret was born in 1736, and became Sachem in 1746.

In 1697, Newport voted other school lands for the benefit of a school master. In 1706, a school house was built at the public charge. To defray the expense the town sold six acres of land, and laid a tax of £150. In 1713, the town voted to establish another school, and Benjamin Nicholson was chosen schoolmaster.¶ In 1726, one hundred and six acres of land

* Barnard's Report, 1848, p. 145.

† Now Exeter.

‡ Potter's Early History of Narragansett, pp. 201, 201. § *Ibid.*

¶ In 1716, Portsmouth "having considered how excellent an ornament learning

were voted for a school house in the eastern part of the town. From this date until the American Revolution, a commendable interest in the cause of education was manifested in Newport—an interest that for a time was paralyzed by the influences of the war. In 1795 the Long Wharf Association of Newport, adopted measures to establish a public school, and provided for its support. The same year Mr. Simeon Potter, of Swansea, Mass., gave to the Association, in trust, an estate in that town, "to support a Free School forever."

In 1827, a public school system in a modified form, was carried into effect, and in 1828, Governor Fenner contributed \$100 to the school fund of Newport, "instead of giving the time honored 'treat' to the people on election day,"—the usual expense of the treat being that amount. From this period, the interest in popular education has advanced in that city, and at the present time the public schools there are among the best in the State.

Providence, in 1663, laid out and reserved "one hundred acres of upland land and six acres of meadow (or lowland to the quantity of eight acres, in lieu of meadow,)" "for the maintenance of a school." Previous to this, home instruction or a Dame's school, probably, answered the needs of the children of the town.

The first recorded acts of the citizens of Bristol in relation to schools bears date September, 1682, when it was voted, "that each person that hath children in town ready to go to school, shall pay three pence the week for each child's schooling to the schoolmaster, and the town by rate according to each ratable estate shall make the wages to amount to £24 the year. The selectmen to look out a grammar schoolmaster and use their endeavor to obtain £5 of the cap^e money granted for such an end." "September, 1648, voted £24 the

is to mankind," adopted measures to build a school house on the south side of the town. Six years later two other school houses were built.—Arnold's R. J., ii., 39.