

**THE FREE SCHOOL IDEA IN
VIRGINIA BEFORE THE CIVIL
WAR, A PHASE OF POLITICAL
AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION**

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The free school idea in Virginia before the Civil War, a phase of political and social evolution by
William Arthur Maddox

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BY

WILLIAM ARTHUR MADDOX

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, SOMETIME RESEARCH SCHOLAR
IN THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION, TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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FOREWORD

THIS study is an attempt to assemble and interpret new documentary evidence upon the evolution of the common free school in Virginia. A preliminary survey of the field, "Elementary Education in Virginia during the Early Nineteenth Century," was submitted to a seminar in the History of American Education at Teachers College in 1911. That investigation represented an effort to organize the facts of local history as a basis for a course in the History of Modern Education for Virginia normal schools, training classes, and study circles of teachers in service.

The investigation has been continued with the belief that the story of the state's educational transition from colony to commonwealth has never been told; that fragmentary bits of evidence have, in the main, suffered misinterpretation from sentimentalist and ill-informed critic alike. Virginia should not be condemned because it was not like the industrial states; nor should its apologists cite the glory of the University and gloss over the very significant struggle for popular education that characterized the Old Dominion during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Virginia before the War did not succeed in creating a centralized state system, supported by compulsory public taxation, but it would be equally wrong to say that it was a laggard among the states. One should approach this period with the assumption that ante-bellum Virginia evolved the foundations, at least, of a common free school system and moved, perhaps, as rapidly to a democratization of its institutions as did any of the agricultural sections of the American states.

My acknowledgment is due Professor Paul Monroe for his investigations and for those standards of scholarship which have been conscious goals in the progress of this work. To Professor William H. Kilpatrick, I am especially indebted for three readings of the manuscript, many conferences, and numerous fruitful suggestions of new lines of research. To

Dr. I. L. Kandel, I am also grateful for a careful, critical reading of the manuscript. To Miss Julia C. Patton, of the Department of English, Teachers College, I am under obligation for assistance in the final revision for the press. The greatest debt, however, is to my wife, without whose encouragement and constant help this study would have been impossible.

W. A. M.

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
December 3, 1917

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