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UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

ORIGIN, HISTORY AND PRESENT ORGANIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

The system of higher education in New York is one of great interest to the students of state educational institutions. It has the interest of age and of historic incident, for it is closely connected with the whole development of the state. The distinguished men who aided in founding it, and their distinguished successors in its control, give to its history that interest which springs from association with conspicuous personality. But it is the greatness of the work achieved by this system in the development of the educational life of the state which chiefly entitles it to be studied. And yet the boundaries of the commonwealth do not bound the historic or the practical importance of the university. The American colonies were profoundly influenced during the latter half of the 18th century by the new educational ideas with which revolutionary France conquered the 19th century. The New York system shows abundant traces of this influence and itself has become a source of an influence which has spread to the Pacific on the one hand and back to Europe on the other.

New York a leader in innovation. New York has always been a leader among the states in the practical methods and organization of

ABBREVIATIONS

New York (state) — University. Regents' report.	Reg. rep't [followed by no. of rep't and year in curves; e. g. Reg. rep't. 102 (1889)].
New York (state) — University. Proceedings of the University convocation.	Conv. proc.
New York (state) — University. Historical and statistical record, by F. B. Hough.	Hist. record.
New York (state) — Public instruction, Sup't of. Annual reports.	Sup't's rep't [followed by no. of rep't and year in curves].
New York legislative papers.	N. Y. leg. papers.

progressive change, whether in politics, in finance, in commerce, in law or in education. The commercial adroitness and activity of the city were strongly marked even under the Dutch régime. The plan for securing paper money issues by national banks was carried to Washington by Secretary Chase, from New York, where it had been in operation for a quarter of a century. Nearly every movement toward the organization of a new political party in the United States has had its source and center in New York. From Aaron Burr to the present time, New York has been the pivot around which revolved the political destiny of aspirants to high office in the nation. Nowhere else has the spoils system in politics, this 19th century survival of the old Teutonic *comitatus*, received so splendid an illustration of its efficiency as a machine for party control, as in New York.

Not even to Massachusetts, does New York yield place in the number and value of her legal reforms, whether in substantive law or in procedure. In the abolition of feudal tenures, of the old cumbersome methods of conveyance of real property and in the simplification of pleadings and procedure, New York has led the way. But these are only instances. Within 20 years England has introduced two most beneficent innovations in her law, viz: the abolition of separate chancery courts and of the disabilities of married women in regard to the ownership of property and the conduct of business. New York anticipated England more than 20 years in these reforms. In the codification of law, also, New York has given the impulse which is gradually transforming the legal systems of this country.

"Innovation," says Henry Adams, speaking of the early years of this century, "was the most useful purpose which New York could serve in human interest, and never was a city better fitted for its work."¹

Plan and scope of the work. The commercial and political importance of the city tends to overshadow the achievements of the commonwealth in other fields of activity. The University of the State of New York is an innovation in educational organization which deserves to be better known. It is the aim of the writer to make this system better known. He has attempted, by a careful outline of the organization and work of this University, to show what this state is doing for the higher education of its people, and what has been the influence of its system and its activity upon the progress of higher education in other states and countries. The University of the State of New York, comprising as it does all the chartered colleges and secondary schools in the state, is an institution unique in its organization and in its methods of work. The writer believes that he has thrown new light upon the beginning of the University and has shown its international origin. It

¹Adams, Henry B. History of the United States of America, v. 1, p. 112.

was but one result of a great movement in educational reform, which in the latter part of the 18th century swept over continental Europe and America. He has, at the same time, pointed out the particular causes which led New York to work out her peculiar system, a system admirably adapted to the needs of the state, and a model which has suggested many reforms beyond the boundaries of the commonwealth. The Empire state has no prouder or juster claim to greatness than her imperial University.

The period from the organization of the University (1784-87) until the beginning of its later increased activity with the law of 1889, has been very hurriedly passed over. This period has been treated fully and ably in a publication prepared under the auspices of the regents of the University, at the time of their centennial celebration in 1884,¹ a work to which the writer is greatly indebted for its valuable collections of facts and the suggestiveness of its historical comments. The later activity of the University has been somewhat more fully treated in this monograph. The revision and codification of the laws relating to the University in 1889, and the extension of its powers thereunder, as well as the present plans and prospects of the University have been carefully studied by the writer, who has made some suggestions as to a further extension of the work of higher education by the University.

In April 1892, a new university law was enacted, just as this monograph was ready for the printer. The purpose of the law was to revise and consolidate the laws relating to the University. It has also revised the general legislation relating to the colleges. It thus covers a wider field than the law of 1889 and might well be called a "Code of higher education." It repeals the most of former laws relating to higher education. It stands thus as the compact embodiment of that historic evolution which the writer has attempted to trace in this narrative. As such, it has seemed best to print it in full, as an appendix. This volume thus serves as an historic introduction to the present law, which must be the starting point of all new developments. The structure, powers and methods of the University itself, remain substantially unaltered. The analysis of the law of 1889 which the writer has given, will therefore, be intelligible to the reader of the law of 1892 and will, in turn, help to make clear the scope and meaning of the latest law. There are two features in the law of 1892 which clearly show the newer spirit of progress in this old, historic University. One is the remarkable emphasis given to libraries as an agency in higher education. The other is the incorporation of university extension as a regular and permanent department of the University work.

¹ N. Y. (state) — University. Historical and statistical record, 1784-1884, by Franklin B. Hough; with an introductory sketch by David Murray, Ph. D., LL. D., sec'y of the regents, Albany, 1885.

CHAPTER I

OUTLINES OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN
NEW YORK

New York has a system of education which is complex and without theoretic unity, a system in fact without system. In its practical working, however, there is a real unity. Like the English constitution it is the result of historic growth, and the practical gifts of the people have made possible the harmonious, efficient management of what would seem like an ill contrived machine, were it the contrivance of a single mind or a single legislature.

Private schools. The state exercises no monopoly of education. While every college, academy and private school is in a very important sense a state institution, yet there has always existed complete freedom of instruction. Splendid work has been done by a multitude of unchartered institutions, unaided by public money, subject to no visitation or control by public authority. It is, however, a settled policy of the state, that all chartered institutions of learning shall be considered as parts of the state system, and while allowed virtually complete self-government in internal administration, shall yet be held accountable to the state for the proper performance of their duties. With the strictly private schools, the present inquiry has no concern.

State educational systems. There are two distinct, coordinated systems of public education in New York; occupying different fields, organized upon different plans; working in great part without reference to each other, and yet in a few points, vitally connected. It will be seen later on, how this anomalous dual system originated. At present a clear statement of the constitution and scope of each is needed, to render plain the lines of this historic inquiry.

I DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, OR COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM

For purposes of primary instruction, the state is divided into 112¹ school commissioner districts. All cities, except Kingston, are excluded from this division. These districts are subdivided into school districts, the number varying according to the needs of each locality.

"The cities, with the above exception, and a few incorporated villages, have school organizations established by special statutes, under the supervision of local superintendents."²

School districts. The school district is the smallest territorial division of the state. The qualified voters of the school district, elect at district meetings, one or three trustees who are the "local executive

¹ In 1884.² Sup't's rep't, 30th (1884), p. 5.

officers empowered to carry out the mandates of the district meetings." They have to report annually to the district meeting and to the school commissioners. The district meeting elects a clerk, collector and a librarian. This system secures thus the most minute local self-government in the matter of the primary schools.

Union free school districts. Under a general law passed in 1853, school districts are authorized to combine into "union free school districts" and to establish graded schools, to be maintained by a general tax. These schools are under the management of elective boards of education with similar powers to those of district trustees. They report to the school commissioners. This plan has been generally adopted in villages, thereby securing a higher grade of education. These union free schools are important as being the main point of contact between the two systems of public instruction.

School commissioners. The electors of each school commissioner's district elect triennially at a general election, a school commissioner. This officer lays out and regulates the boundaries between school districts, apportions the public money allotted to his district by the state superintendent, and in general, exercises a constant and minute supervision over all matters relating to the school districts within his jurisdiction. School commissioners have advisory powers with school district trustees and in some few matters compulsory powers. They examine and license teachers within their districts, and examine and recommend candidates for appointment as students in the normal schools. They are required to make annual reports to the state superintendent "containing a complete abstract of all the material facts, statistical and financial, required and¹ contained in all the trustees' reports to the commissioners" as well as observations and suggestions on their own part or in response to special enquiries from the superintendent.

City public schools. "The city public schools, and those in some of the incorporated villages having a population of not less than 5,000, are managed by local boards of education under special statutes." In some cities and villages these schools are under the supervision, not of school commissioners, but of special local superintendents, who report both to the local boards and to the state superintendent.

State superintendent of public instruction. This educational division and organization of the state has no vital relation to the political system of the county and township subdivision. Territorially and personally this educational system is independent and complete in itself. The minute local self-government in the school districts is counterbalanced by the centralization of power in the state super-

¹ Sup't's rep't, 30th (1884), p. 8.

intendent of public instruction. This state officer is intrusted with powers of a character almost autocratic. He is elected by the joint ballots of the senate and assembly, and holds office for three years. This office has existed since 1854 when the department of public instruction was organized upon its present basis.¹ Besides appointing the working force in his own bureau, "he makes appointments of state pupils to the institution for the instruction of the deaf and dumb and the blind, upon the certificates of the proper local officers, . . . and has charge of all the Indian schools upon the several Indian reservations"² and appoints their superintendents. He apportions and distributes the public money appropriated by the legislature for the support of schools" amounting to more than \$4,000,000 annually. "He compiles the abstracts of the reports from all the school districts in the state, reported to him by the school commissioners, and the matters reported to him by city superintendents, boards of education of incorporated villages organized by special statutes providing for local supervision, and reports annually to the legislature."³

He has general supervision over all the agencies for the training of teachers. The system for the training of public school teachers is, in theory, a complete one. There are:

Uniform examinations	Academic teachers' classes
Teachers' institutes	Normal schools ⁴

Uniform examinations for teachers' certificates. While teachers' licenses are issued upon examination by school commissioners and other local officers, such licenses are valid only within the district of such examining officer. State certificates are issued only upon examinations conducted by examiners appointed by the state superintendent, who also "with the assistance of the regular corps of institute instructors, prepares the examination questions to be used in such examinations."⁴ He also regulates the grades of the certificates issued by school commissioners.

Teachers' institutes. These popular training classes are held annually in each school commission district and are attended by a total of about 20,000 teachers. The usual length of the session is one week. The state superintendent has the control of these institutes, appointing the regular and special instructors, and directing the work.

¹ Laws of 1854, ch. 97. Sup't's rep't, 30th (1884), p. 5-58. Sup't's rep't, 32d (1886), p. 5-72. These two reports taken together give a valuable account of the organization and working of the department of public instruction.

² Sup't's rep't, 30th (1884), p. 11.

³ There is also in New York city a "College for the training of teachers," but this is a part of the University and is connected only with higher education.

⁴ Sup't's rep't, 32d (1886), p. 9.

Teachers' classes in academies. The act above referred to, which authorized the consolidation of several school districts into "union free school districts," also authorized the establishment in these union schools of "academic departments." These academic departments were regarded as of equal grade with the academies which were under the supervision of the University and hence being a part of the system of secondary instruction were made subject to the visitation and control, not of the state superintendent, but of the regents of the University. In 1834 the regents were authorized to establish in the academies, classes for the training of teachers, which classes have been maintained ever since in academies, and also since 1877 in the academic departments of union schools. In 1888 there were 3,258 pupils in these classes who attended over 10 weeks and 2,676 who completed the full course of 16 weeks. They are regarded as "about the only instrumentality for training teachers for our ungraded schools."¹

By a law passed April 15, 1889,² "the powers and duties conferred and imposed upon the regents of the University by 'previous acts' relative to the instruction of classes in academies and union schools in the science and practice of common school teaching are hereby transferred to the superintendent of public instruction." This law was the result of some deliberation on the part of the regents and the association of academic principals, and was passed upon being recommended by the regents in their report to the legislature.³ Its object was to bring under a single management all the instrumentalities for the preparation of common school teachers. This transfer included the management of the annual appropriation of \$30,000 for maintaining the teachers' classes. In 1890, the annual appropriation was increased to \$60,000.⁴

Normal schools. There are now 11 of these state schools. The oldest of these, the Albany state normal school, was founded in 1844, and placed under the joint management of the superintendent of common schools (since 1854, the superintendent of public instruction) and the regents of the University. "The local management of the latter school (the Albany state normal school) is vested in an executive committee consisting of five members, of whom the state superintendent is one, and the other four are appointed by the joint action of the state superintendent and the regents of the University."⁵ On March 13, 1890, the regents made this school "the New York state normal college," and its work has been reorganized upon a higher basis, instructing only ad-

¹ Reg. rep't, 102 (1889), p. 821.

² Laws of 1889, ch. 137.

³ Reg. rep't, 103 (1889), p. 27, 268.

⁴ Laws of 1890, ch. 170.

⁵ Sup't's rep't, 32d (1886), p. 7.